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ABSTRACT

In Bologna, Italy, in 1999 a declaration was signed that spelled out the beginnings of a common European Higher Education Area. At a summit in Prague, Czech Republic, in 2001, the idea initiated in Bologna was clearly endorsed. In the successive period from 2001 to 2003, awareness of the importance of the Bologna process and the real need for the common higher education area dramatically increased all around Europe at governmental and institutional levels. "Bologna" has become a new European higher education brand, easily recognized in governmental policies, academic activities, international organizations, networks, and media. This report synthesizes, to the extent possible in the given frame, the evidence of problems and solutions and the essence of discussions and contributions in the followup period of 2001-2003. The first chapter evaluated the Bologna process from a current perspective. The second chapter focuses on the outcomes of events, including: (1) followup seminars and related activities; (2) further accessions to the Process and its external dimension; and (3) realization of the main goals from Bologna and Prague, pointing toward the summit planned for Berlin in September 2003. The third chapter focuses on problems and issues important for the near future, and the fourth relates to steering of the Bologna process. A bibliography and Internet sources are listed in chapter 5, and a list of abbreviations is in chapter 6. The annexes contain recommendations from all 10 official Bologna followup seminars. (Contains 106 references.) (SLD)

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Education and Culture

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BOLOGNA PROCESS
BETWEEN PRAGUE AND BERLIN

Report to the Ministers of Education of the signatory countries

Berlin, September 2003

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Prague Summit (2001) clearly confirmed that the idea initiated in Bologna two years earlier had evolved into a unique international process of exceptional importance for the future of higher education in Europe. *In the successive period 2001 – 2003, awareness of the importance of the Bologna process and the real need for a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA) dramatically increased all around Europe*, not only at governmental level but also at the level of institutions. Some new European countries expressed readiness to join the Bologna process while it has also received growing interest from other parts of the world. *"Bologna" has become a new European higher education brand, today easily recognized in governmental policies, academic activities, international organizations, networks and media.* The Process now enters a demanding phase in which answers to particular problems detected in the last follow-up period should be found, and detailed strategies and "tuned" structural as well as social tools should be developed.

During the 2001-2003 period, several factors have been pushing the signatory partners of "Bologna" towards a more substantial commitment to the process. They have been preparing and implementing substantial reforms in their higher education systems. There is no country today which has not found it essential to search for complex answers for its future, also through the educational system; there is no country which has not put the reform of higher education high on its political agenda. Even if a country considered this need only for itself, it would be enormously important to study the practices of other countries and their educational systems. However, the Bologna process is much more than just an excellent set of good practices. Challenges to national higher education systems are interlinked with challenges brought about by growing European associating, (re)integrating and globalising processes. In that sense, the Process expresses a conviction of countries and institutions that under these new circumstances national higher education systems should become more comparable and compatible but also more attractive on a global scale.

The "Bologna Club" and the European Union are not of the same composition but most of these principles are applicable in both cases. "The Club" has not been founded on out-voting each other but on jointly exploring the most important issues and searching for consensus. There are *national* educational systems and curricula but there is also a firm understanding that *European cultural diversity* gives us great advantages and richness. Our advantages and richness can be mutually and fully enjoyed only if we create solid "common roads" among us. Richness is the end; "common roads" are the necessary means.

Although the Bologna process was initiated as mainly an intergovernmental process, there is an evident and *growing convergence with EU processes* aimed at strengthening European co-operation in higher education. Decisions of the Spring European Councils, in particular of Lisbon (2000), Stockholm (2001) and Barcelona (2002), as well as the consecutive EU Education Councils have gradually altered the status of the *Bologna Declaration* from a voluntary action to a set of commitments in the framework of the follow-up of the report of the concrete future objectives of education and training systems, endorsed in Stockholm in 2001. At least from this point on, the Process was no longer merely a voluntary action for the EU Member States, or for the candidate Member States either. Therefore, in the light of EU enlargement, the growing convergence between the Bologna process and educational policy making on the EU level will soon become more and more visible. However, since its establishment the "Bologna Club" has been wider than the EU, and even after the forthcoming EU enlargement in 2004 it will remain wider. This can only give additional dynamism to the Process.

In the forefront of the follow-up process between Prague and Berlin was *a series of official follow-up seminars which aimed* to explore the areas pointed out in the *Prague Communiqué*. The list of official conferences between Prague and Berlin consists of ten seminars, spread over the period between March 2002 and June 2003, organized in six problem areas (quality assurance and accreditation;

recognition issues and the use of credits; development of joint degrees; degree and qualification structure; social dimensions of the Bologna process; lifelong learning) and covering all key issues of the Bologna Process. Altogether, more than 1 000 participants – representatives from national ministries and international organizations, experts, academics, students, employers etc. – took part in all ten official Bologna follow-up seminars. The seminars have developed into a unique pan-European forum, which reflects the "snowball effect" of the Bologna process.

On the other hand, particular contributions by the EU Commission as well as by the Council of Europe, the European University Association (EUA), the European association of institutions in higher education (EURASHE) and National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) have to be mentioned separately.

The Bologna process fits closely into the broader agenda defined at a meeting of the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000, stressing the importance of "education and training for living and working in the knowledge society". In 2002 and 2003, the *D. G. of Education and Culture* released successive *Progress Reports* that offered a systemic review of its various and continuous activities and measures related to the Process. In most cases, the Commission is implementing measures in direct partnership with the higher education sector of the EU member and associate countries but also other countries. Today, the Community programme Socrates (and Erasmus within it) is a widely known promoter of the developmental projects and of the continuous increase of students' and teachers' mobility in European higher education. Socrates-Erasmus is also the main mechanism for the promotion of ECTS and the large-scale introduction of the Diploma Supplement. New exploratory projects have been launched in 2002, aimed at expanding the ECTS experience to lifelong learning. Measures to promote European co-operation in quality assurance are also high on their agenda.

The Council of Europe is another important contributor to the Bologna process. First and foremost, it has taken on the distinguished role of a bridge between those countries party to the Bologna process and the remaining European countries – signatories of the European Cultural Convention – that may benefit from the Process but that are not (yet) party to it. It is also an important actor in recognition issues. Traditionally, the Council has offered a platform for debate between Ministry and academic representatives, through the double composition of representatives in its *Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research* (CD-ESR). At the October 2002 plenary session of the CD-ESR a well-attended round table debate on the Bologna process was organized; it was one of those events of the period between Prague and Berlin with the highest representation (over 50 delegations). Finally, one particularly important contribution refers to a number of seminars on the Process in the countries that have not yet joined officially (South-Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation).

EUA in general, and various activities of individual *universities and higher education institutions* in particular, have also been very influential during the period 2001–2003. EUA's contributions during this period are numerous and wide-ranging: they arch from Council meetings and animation of internal discussions on main issues with members institutions, through active involvement in the work of the official follow up bodies (as an observer) as well as participation in the follow-up seminars, to launching pilot projects with help from EC Socrates Programme, coordinating ECTS and DS counsellors, etc. In this context, the *Trends III Report* is not to be missed. A special mention should be given to the EUA Convention on *Strengthening the Role of Institutions* in Graz (Austria) in May 2003, which formed the peak of activities for this period and was an important advance in the Bologna process. The Convention affirmed that its common vision is a Europe of knowledge based on strong research and research-based education in universities across the continent.

EURASHE represents *professional higher education institutions* which form an important part of tertiary education. Through its active contribution at follow-up events, it has presented specific aspects and concerns that are essential to a complete understanding of key issues. EURASHE's Annual Conference held in Gyöngyös (Hungary) in June 2003 confirmed again that institutions of professional higher education definitely belong to the emerging EHEA. These institutions also play a part in implementing the two-tier structure throughout Europe putting strong emphasis on social relevance

and practical preparation of students for the reality of the world of work. EURASHE's particular contribution to the follow-up process between Prague and Berlin is the *Survey of Tertiary Short-Cycle Education in Europe*. It defines tertiary short-cycle education with regard to existing sub-degree education in European countries. A comprehensive, up-to-date presentation of this sector could well be used as the main reference in comparative discussions.

Student organizations have been particularly active partners in the Process during the follow-up period 2001–2003. There were no official Bologna follow-up seminars without student representatives, and they have always contributed competently and constructively to seminar results. Numerous activities have been well co-ordinated through ESIB as the students' representative at the European level. Today, there is no key theme within the Process that has not been discussed in the framework of European student organizations. As a result, ESIB produced a set of valuable policy documents. ESIB's *Brussels Student Declaration* (November 2001) states that creating a genuine European Higher Education Area requires more than educational, structural and institutional changes; what is really important is access to higher education on an equitable basis. The *Communiqué of* the 5th European student convention (Athens, February 2003) emphasizes the multiple benefits of study abroad but also deals with a number of factors that limit and hinder genuine student mobility and need to be progressively removed to achieve a higher participation rate in mobility schemes.

An important extension of the Bologna process in the period between the Prague and Berlin Summits are the "Bologna activities" at national and institutional levels. Any attempt to report on numerous activities at these levels would be doomed to remain incomplete. *National reports* (prepared in spring and summer 2003) offer an extremely useful insight into them. A high degree of correspondence between national higher education reforms and "Bologna" action lines is evident. Almost all countries report on establishing "Bologna co-ordination groups" and on organizing national "Bologna events". Reports from most countries also contain information about *lively activities at the institutional level and in student organizations*. Partners in these activities are becoming aware that round tables, debates and communication on various "Bologna" issues are meaningful and productive in relation to their own national and local problems. In a growing number of cases, other stakeholders – employers and social partners in particular – take part in these discussions and communications.

Probably the clearest proof that the Process has now reached the concrete level of subject-specific study areas comes from the growing number of reports and communications from specialized organizations, academic and professional associations, networks, various initiative groups, etc. Here also, we witness an extremely wide spectrum of activities and initiatives. It is impossible to review them all here in the limited frame of this report; therefore, only a few specific cases – e.g. associations in engineering (CESAER and SEFI), in arts (ELIA and AEC), in law (ELFA), in education (TNTEE); co-operation projects as "Tuning", "Joint Masters' Project", Quality Culture Project, Joint Quality Initiative, ENQA, ECA, ICE-PLAR; contributions by ENIC and NARIC Networks, European Access Network, etc. – are given to illustrate their dimension, frequency, weight and importance while bibliographical and website sources are given for a more comprehensive picture.

Since the Prague Summit, a constant and growing interest for joining the Bologna process and/or for various modes of participating has been observed. Official follow-up bodies (BFUG and BPG) paid considerable attention to issues of further accessions to the Process and its "external dimension".

BFUG and BPG were in a permanent communication with countries which applied for joining at the Berlin Summit. On the other hand, *an internal discussion on further accessions* focused on the need to revise the eligibility criteria laid down in the *Prague Communiqué*, and to introduce into the *Berlin Communiqué* also a specific commitment of the signatory states to realize the Bologna objectives, notwithstanding national differences and particularities. While the origin of this debate is to be found in (a) possible applications for further accessions, it quickly became clear that this was only one of the issues in the further development of the Bologna process as a framework for the reform of higher education in Europe, and that the question of new accessions cannot be divorced from (b) considerations of the implementation of the Bologna process by its current members. *The closer we*

get to 2010, the more important it will be to assess whether policies have been implemented or are likely to be put in place in time for the EHEA to be established.

The increasing relevance and attractiveness of the Bologna process in the global higher education arena also manifested itself in the 2001-2003 period. Partly, these issues have been linked to the UNESCO agenda and its various international fora; partly there have also been purely "regionally grounded" interests, for example from some Latin American or Caribbean countries where the Bologna process is being considered as a possible model of good practice for the further development of higher education. In discussions, it was pointed out that the Process has its own identity; but it is clear that ways need to be found to deal with the "external dimension" of the Process in future. It was agreed that UNESCO Headquarters might offer a great service, and in fact it has already expressed its interest in participating more actively in the Bologna process.

How the particular goals of both the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué are reflected in all these discussions, findings and documents of the follow-up period? As we saw, conclusions and recommendations from official follow up seminars are important but they are not the only reference points to answer this question; surveys and studies developed in parallel to the seminars, other discussions, various projects and events should be also taken into account. For that reason, the impact of various Bologna events of the period 2001-2003 is considered in two roughly-drawn clusters – *structural* and *social* dimensions of the Bologna process – at the end of the main chapter.

This is a report commissioned by the Follow-up Group of the Bologna process; therefore, at the end a notice on *the work of both follow-up bodies (BFUG and BPG)* as well as some *remarks on steering the Process* are also made. BFUG and BPG have been responsible for the successful implementation of decisions from Prague but they also had to take care of the steering process itself: to reflect on and evaluate their own work, advantages and deficiencies of structures, and methods developed since Bologna and Prague. Thus, BFUG prepared a "Berlin" proposal for further "handling" of the Process aiming at even more efficient work of the next follow up period 2003 – 2005.

At the end, *Bibliography and Internet sources* are listed for everybody who would like to study results of the follow up period 2001 – 2003 in details, and *a list of abbreviations* is also added. In the *annexes,* recommendations from all ten official Bologna follow-up seminars are given.

1. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE PRAGUE SUMMIT 2001

1.1 Introduction

01. The Prague Summit (18-19 May 2001) clearly confirmed that the idea initiated in Bologna two years earlier (19 June 1999) had evolved into a unique international process of exceptional importance for the future of higher education in Europe. In the successive period 2001 – 2003, awareness of the importance of the Bologna process and the real need for a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA) dramatically increased all around Europe, not only at governmental level but also – thanks to the support of the academic community – at the level of institutions. Some new European countries expressed readiness to join the Process while it has also received growing interest from other parts of the world.

"Bologna" has become a new European higher education brand, today easily recognized in governmental policies, academic activities, international organizations, networks and media.

However, "Bologna" connects all partners sharing this brand. With the brand, they also share a conviction that the Process has now advanced to a degree which does not allow any retreat from the general goals stated in Bologna and confirmed in Prague. On the contrary, the Process now enters a demanding phase in which answers to particular problems detected in the last follow-up period should be found, and detailed strategies and "tuned" structural as well as social tools should be developed. Berlin is a crucial landmark in this process.

This report has a sole intention: to synthesize – as much as possible in the given frame – the evidence of problems and solutions as well as the essence of discussions and contributions of the follow-up period 2001-2003. In the *first chapter*, we will venture an evaluation of the Bologna process from today's perspective. The *second chapter* focuses on outcomes of events, classified into three parts: (a) follow-up seminars, special contributions and other related activities on various levels, (b) further accessions to the Process and its "external dimension", and (c) realization of the main goals from Bologna and Prague, from the perspective of the most recent follow-up period. The *third chapter* centres on problems and issues important for the near future, and the *fourth chapter* relates to steering of the Bologna process, that is the work of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and the Bologna Preparatory Group (BPG). *Bibliography and Internet sources* are listed in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter *a list of abbreviations* is added. Finally, in the *annexes*, recommendations from all ten official Bologna follow-up seminars are given. In order to make reading easier, cross references (**bold** figure in brackets, referring to the relevant paragraph) and some footnotes are also added.

1.2 Trends and developments – four years after

02. Witnesses of the signing ceremony in Bologna in June 1999 would quite probably agree that nobody at that time expected such a fast and broad development of the ideas embodied in the *Declaration*. Paradoxically, it seems that in the later stages we encounter more problems and difficulties than during the initial phase of the process. As we have learned from our history, real scholarship consists of constant questioning to enable us to describe the "landscape" of the problem, to safeguard us from getting lost in its labyrinth, and finally to offer some logically coherent and practically feasible answers. "Bologna" has an extremely complex landscape: it is not only about study structures, recognition of qualifications or even about governance of higher education but it is also about strengthening the research component, social dimensions and lifelong perspectives in higher education. More: it is about constructing a European dimension while preserving our diversities at the same time; it is about economic growth and social cohesion of our societies; it is about growing

international co-operation and about competition on a global scale. In that sense, the Bologna process is an area-specific answer to challenges we all face in the contemporary world.

03. During the 2001-2003 period, several factors have been pushing the signatory partners of "Bologna" towards a more substantial commitment to the process. They have been preparing and implementing substantial reforms in their higher education systems. There is no country today which has not found it essential – from the point of view of *national interests* – to search for complex answers for its future, also through the educational system; there is no country which has not put the reform of (higher) education high on its political agenda. Even if a country considered this need only for itself, it would be enormously important to study the practices of other countries and their educational systems. Reforms of national education systems all over Europe, the systemic exchange of information between countries, and *expanded co-operation on the international level* encourage each particular country to intensify its search for more coherent, compatible and productive solutions.

However, the Bologna process is much more than just an excellent set of good practices. *Challenges to national higher education systems are interlinked with challenges brought about by growing European associating, (re)integrating and globalising processes.* In that sense, the Bologna process expresses a conviction of countries and institutions that under these new circumstances national higher education systems should become more comparable and compatible, more interlinked and interdependent but also more attractive on a global scale. Nobody pushes them in that direction administratively; it is more and more a national need and a national priority. To fulfil that need, a country has to take advantage of the common European cultural diversity, different traditions in research and teaching. It has to improve continuously the quality of education, easy student mobility, and recognition of qualifications. Evidently, these tasks require mutual co-operation, but they also demand, again and again, pushing forward at the national level.

The "Bologna Club" and the European Union are not of the same composition but most of these principles are applicable in both cases. "The Club" has not been founded on out-voting each other but on jointly exploring the most important issues, on open discussions and searching for consensus. From this point of view, "the European educational system" or "the European curriculum" do not exist; nor do signatory countries wish to establish them. There are national educational systems and curricula but there is also a firm understanding that European cultural diversity gives us great advantages and richness. *Our advantages and richness can be mutually and fully enjoyed only if we create solid "common roads" among us.* We couldn't take advantage of our cultural diversity, different traditions in research and teaching, we couldn't enhance mobility and recognition, improve quality and promote our knowledge worldwide – neither as a national state nor as an association – if our *systems* remained rigid, insisting on particularities and exclusiveness. Richness is the end; "common roads" are the necessary means. We must build them.

Therefore, joining the Bologna Club is not just a verbal note to neighbours; it demands hard work at the national level to improve and connect the "local infrastructure" to agreed "common roads": readable and comparable degrees, quality assurance, promotion of mobility, etc., etc. *The follow-up period 2001-2003 firmly confirmed these beliefs.* National reports provided at the end of this period and available at the official Berlin Summit website speak for themselves. A huge amount of work has been done: improvements of national systems are interlinked with gradual implantation of the "Bologna" action lines. At the same time the process showed clearly that discussions and searching for consensus are hard but trustworthy methods, and provide a realistic guarantee of resolution of problems, controversies, dilemmas and paradoxes appearing in the process. These methods will become more and more useful and effective as "the Club" evolves into more firm and binding forms.

04. The initial ideas - expressed on an intergovernmental level in Paris (1998), in Bologna (1999), and further developed as part of the Process - that enhanced European co-operation in (higher) education is a matter of urgency, have found clear correspondence with several European Council documents. One of most frequently cited sentences from the Lisbon European Council's (March 2000) Conclusions is deeply linked with these ideas: "The Union has today set itself a *new strategic goal* for the next

decade: *to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.*" Such an ambitious goal demands precision as well as concrete action targets, and the European Council has asked the Council of Education "to undertake a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity".[1] The process which animated European higher education in the 1990s received an additional and specific confirmation; during the same period, ideas about enhanced European co-operation broadened their relevance to education and training in general. Two years later (Barcelona 2002), the European Council made an even clearer reference to the emerging common area of higher education, and called for further action "to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications (ECTS, diploma and certificate supplements, European CV) and closer co-operation with regard to university degrees in the context of the Sorbonne-Bologna-Prague process prior to the Berlin meeting in 2003; similar action should be promoted in the area of vocational training".[2]

05. It was clear: enhanced co-operation not only in higher education but also in vocational education and training (VET) is essential to meet the mandate of the Barcelona European Council and to make Europe's education and training systems a world-wide quality reference by 2010. Moreover, the Bologna process - at least indirectly - was an important incentive for launching the so-called *Bruges-Copenhagen process*. The decisive step in this direction was the Bruges meeting of the EU Directors General for vocational training in 2001, which initiated a thorough political process aimed at developing transparency and mutual trust in VET. On 30 November 2002, the education ministers of 31 European countries and the European Commission adopted the *Copenhagen Declaration* on enhanced co-operation in European vocational education and training. This meeting was also attended by the European Social Partners, underlining their commitment and indispensable role in the enhancement of co-operation in VET. The Declaration follows a Resolution of the Education Council on the same subject, taking up the same principles and priorities for enhanced co-operation, and ensuring that the candidate countries, EEA-EFTA countries, and Social Partners are involved as full partners in the follow-up to this important initiative.

In its first lines, the *Copenhagen Declaration* recalls the *Bologna Declaration* which "marked the introduction of a new enhanced European co-operation" in the area of higher education and enlarges its spirit in the area of VET. The *Copenhagen Declaration* stresses the following main priorities: strengthening the European dimension in VET, increasing transparency through implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, supporting information, guidance and counselling, encouraging recognition of competences and/or qualifications through developing reference levels, principles for certification, a credit transfer system for VET, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and promoting co-operation in quality assurance. The Declaration states that "measures should be voluntary and principally developed through bottom-up co-operation" and that "co-operation should be based on the target of 2010, set by the European Council in accordance with the detailed work programme and the follow-up of the Objectives Report".[3] The Copenhagen meeting will be followed up in 2004 by a second ministerial meeting under the Dutch presidency, where progress against all the priorities of the Declaration will be assessed and new priorities established.

06. Although the Bologna process was initiated (and has been characterized) as mainly an intergovernmental process, there is – at least seen not only from the perspective of the 15 EU Member States but also the 10 candidate Member States, all of which are signatory to the *Bologna Declaration*

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[1] *Presidency Conclusions*. Lisbon European Council, 23-24 March 2000 (5 and 27).

[2] *Presidency Conclusions*. Barcelona European Council, 15-16 March 2002 (44).

[3] "*Copenhagen Declaration*". Declaration of European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European co-operation in vocational education and training.

– an evident and growing convergence with EU processes aimed at strengthening European co-operation in higher education. Decisions of the Spring European Councils, in particular of Lisbon (2000), Stockholm (2001) and Barcelona (2002), as well as the consecutive EU Education Councils have gradually altered the status of the *Bologna Declaration* from *a voluntary action* to a set of *commitments* in the framework of the follow-up of the report of the concrete future objectives of education and training systems, endorsed in Stockholm in 2001. The Bologna process and its action lines are explicitly mentioned as important for the implementation of the objective of "strengthening European co-operation"; that is, objective 3.5[4] of the so-called "Objectives Report". At least from this point on, the Bologna process was no longer merely a voluntary action for the EU Member States, or for the candidate Member States either. The follow-up of the "Objectives Report" will last until 2010, and in the meantime the accession of new countries to the EU will go on. Therefore, in the light of EU enlargement, the growing convergence between the Bologna process and educational policy making on the EU level will soon become more and more visible. However, since its establishment the "Bologna Club" has been wider than the EU, and even after the forthcoming EU enlargement in 2004 it will remain wider. This can only give additional dynamism to the Process.

07. The follow-up period 2001-2003 shows an ever broader and stronger commitment to the Paris-Bologna-Prague objectives. "Bologna" has continued to develop from an intergovernmental action to a broad process which encompasses – besides governmental bodies – on the one hand, international organizations, and on the other, higher education institutions, students and various stakeholders.

Therefore, the *Bologna process today is an item on various agendas*. What does this mean? First of all, it is proof of the vitality of the initial idea. Further, it is proof that the Process has evolved to a stage where the principles are brought face to face with the "devils of details". This stage is most crucial for the future of the Process and for the expected European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Now, concrete answers should be developed to break the spell and to clarify details. It is a particularly important time for *higher education institutions*, which have to develop appropriate contents and tools for research, teaching and governance. It is an important time for *national ministries* to help remove legal obstacles, strengthen efficiency of the system and provide stable financing. It is an important time for *all other partners*, which calls for an enhanced participation and co-ordination of the process.

08. The *Trends I* and *Trends II* reports have provided important and effective contributions to the Bologna and Prague Summits; they give a sound picture of relevant trends and developments in higher education. The *Trends III Report*,[5] a survey conducted by the European University Association (EUA) and funded with support from the European Commission, gives an even more comprehensive picture than the previous reports. Its particular significance lies in a broader methodology: this is the first time that, besides ministries, higher education institutions themselves have been asked for their feedback on the implementation of the European Higher Education Area. Results of the survey are based on 800

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[4] "In the new Europe of the knowledge society, citizens should be able to learn and work together throughout Europe, and make full use of their qualifications wherever they are. In the higher education area in particular, the obstacles to mobility and to recognition of qualifications are already being tackled both through the EU instruments (such as the ECTS or the university partnerships within the Socrates programme) and through the 'Bologna process'. However, in many areas there is substantial work to be done. Therefore higher education institutions and other educational authorities should be encouraged to develop more compatible systems of qualifications across Europe and a common understanding of what are the minimum levels of quality required for accreditation. The policies on the transparency and recognition of qualifications must be strengthened. The development of joint degrees and qualifications and on the accreditation systems must be supported if the education and training institutions in Europe are to be recognised world-wide as centres of excellence." - *Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of educational and training systems in Europe* Council of European Union, Brussels, 20 February 2002, p. 42.

[5] Reichert, S. and Tauch, Ch., *Trends in Learning Structures in European Higher Education III: Bologna four years after: Steps towards sustainable reform of higher education in Europe*. EUA Graz Convention, 29-31 May 2003. - http://eua.uni-graz.at/documents.html

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responses to a questionnaire returned from all 33 countries. In addition, responses from national student organizations are also included. Thus, *Trends III gives an excellent insight in the trends and developments* from the perspective of key players at the national level: ministries, institutions and students.

As the *Trends III Report* forms part of the Berlin Summit documentation, the present report will concentrate on main events, in particular follow-up seminars, activities of the international and institutional partners, and reports from various relevant networks and projects.

2. OUTCOMES OF THE EVENTS

09. As already noted, the follow-up process between Prague and Berlin has been extraordinarily intensive, but in the forefront of events was *a series of official follow-up seminars* which aimed to explore the areas pointed out in the *Prague Communiqué*. Basic facts about these seminars are presented in the first sub-chapter below (2.1.1). The seminars have developed into a unique pan-European forum, which reflects the "snowball effect" of the Bologna process. The contributions, challenges and responses of the seminars – together with findings, problems and dilemmas encountered as well as some possible answers – are presented in subsequent chapters.

2.1 Main events and developments

2.1.1 Official Bologna Follow-up Seminars

10. The list of *official conferences between Prague and Berlin* consists of *ten seminars organized in six problem areas* and covering all key issues of the Bologna Process. Seminars took place in ten countries (Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, Finland, Denmark, Greece, Norway and Czech Republic) spread over the period between March 2002 and June 2003. Organizers were mostly respective national Ministries and Rectors' Conferences but also the Council of Europe, European Universities Association (EUA), local higher education institutions and student organizations.

Seminars were open to participants from all signatory countries, to countries that have applied to join, to representatives of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the EUA, the European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) as well as to other interested organizations and individuals. Altogether, more than 1 000 participants – representatives from national ministries and international organizations, experts, academics, students, employers etc. – took part in all ten official Bologna follow-up seminars. On average, there were approximately 80 participants per seminar; in some cases even more (e.g. the Zürich seminar on the use of credits with 330 participants). All seminars consisted of plenary sessions and workshops, thus giving opportunity for active participation and for detailed elaboration of various aspects of the seminar themes. Surveys based on special questionnaires and analytical papers have been prepared and put on web sites together with experts' presentations and final conclusions and recommendations. Several publications have also been edited (see *4.1. Bibliography*) and widely distributed.

11. *Quality Assurance and Accreditation.* This issue was systematically discussed at the conference 'Working on the European Dimension of Quality', held in Amsterdam, 12-13 March 2002, and organized by the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) on the initiative of the Ministries of Education of the Netherlands and Flanders. Participants analysed movements towards a European dimension in quality assurance and accreditation and launched a debate on shared generic descriptors for Bachelor and Master learning outcomes (prepared by the "Joint Quality Initiative"). The debate was enriched by contributions from representatives of the *Tuning* project. This was the very first seminar in the follow-up period 2001 – 2003, and the only official Bologna follow-up seminar during this period that covered systemically the issue of quality assurance and accreditation.

However, this topic has been constantly under discussion at almost all other conferences as well as at other nationally or internationally related events. Contributions and outcomes of the Amsterdam Seminar appeared also as a book published in 2003.

12. *Recognition Issues and the Use of Credits*. Two events dealt with these issues. The first, a seminar on "Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process", was held in Lisbon on 11-12 April 2002 as a Council of Europe contribution to the emerging EHEA, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education of Portugal. The seminar was organized to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Council of Europe/UNESCO *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (*Lisbon Recognition Convention*; 1997), and to take stock of the current situation with regard to the recognition of qualifications; a third aim was to outline how improving the recognition of qualifications can contribute to establishing the EHEA. The seminar adopted a broad set of recommendations to various stakeholders: institutions, academic networks and student organizations, ENIC and NARIC, Governments and international organizations, etc. This document makes an important contribution to the growing awareness of the crucial role which recognition issues will play in the ongoing development of the EHEA.

The second event, a conference on 'Credit Transfer and Accumulation – the Challenge for Institutions and Students' was held at ETH Zürich, 11-12 October 2002, and was jointly organized by EUA and Swiss Confederation. This was the most heavily attended official follow-up seminar, with participants from many European universities, student bodies, national ministries and international organizations. They agreed on a number of key features of credit transfer and accumulation, and on the importance of introducing widely the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as the only broadly tested credit system in Europe. Participants focused on defining the objectives of a credit transfer and accumulation system such as ECTS, and recognized key features of such a system. At the same time, a number of open issues for further reflection were identified, e.g. the role of ECTS in developing joint degrees, the issue of the grading scale, links between credits and levels, quality assurance, etc. These issues were further discussed in the period prior to the EUA Convention in May 2003.

13. *Development of Joint Degrees* was also discussed at two seminars, organized successively in Spring 2002 and in Spring 2003. The first, "Seminar on Joint Degrees within the Framework of the Bologna Process", was organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Sweden and took place in Stockholm, 30-31 May 2002. The seminar explored the possibilities of the development of joint degrees as a means of achieving the objectives set in the *Bologna Declaration*; its focus was mainly on the legal aspects and a common European framework for such degrees. As a basis for the discussions, a compilation was prepared of the responses (from 17 European countries and European Commission) to a special questionnaire. The seminar developed a set of criteria that could be useful common denominators for European joint degrees.

The second seminar on this topic, "Integrated Programmes – Implications and Prospects", was organized by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research of Italy and held on 11-12 April 2003 in Mantova. It focused more on the content and curriculum development of such degrees, taking into account various statements and conclusions developed at previous seminars. In particular, participants discussed motivations for planning as well as methodology for designing and implementing integrated curricula, various concepts and models in integrated programmes at Master level, and prospects in integrated Doctoral studies. The seminar took stock of the respective trends in national legislation and policies; it also stressed the impact of integrated curricula on citizenship and employability.

14. *Degree and Qualification Structure*. These were discussed at two successive follow-up events, both in March 2003. However, these topics were also high on the agendas of almost all other follow-up seminars and other related meetings. The Finnish Ministry of Education organized an "International Seminar on Master-level Degrees" in Helsinki on 14-15 March 2003. (It should be noted here that Helsinki also hosted a closely related follow-up seminar as early as 2001 – "Seminar on Bachelor-level Degrees", 16-17 February 2001, before the Prague Summit.) The 2003 Helsinki seminar focused on different dimensions of Master degrees as second-cycle higher education qualifications in European

countries, discussed mobility and multicultural implications of the two-tier system as well as its position in global competitiveness in higher education. Seminar participants also searched for a possible common framework. In the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar, they identified several common denominators for a Master degree in the EHEA.

Two weeks later, the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation in co-operation with the Danish Rectors' Conference organized a seminar on "Qualification Structures in Higher Education in Europe" (Copenhagen, 27-28 March 2003). This time, the development of a higher education qualifications framework and alternative approaches for clarifying the cycles and levels in these qualifications were in the frontline. In a detailed survey for this seminar, all main trends and approaches were presented, offering a useful starting point for discussion. In the working groups, participants discussed qualifications framework in relation to three key issues: curriculum planning, quality assurance, and recognition. The seminar reporter produced a comprehensive report which can serve as a useful synthesis document for further work. Concrete recommendations were adopted at the end. This Copenhagen seminar was an important milestone in understanding structural issues in the emerging EHEA, and therefore of great importance for the further Process.

15. The topic *Social Dimensions of the Bologna Process* was highlighted in the *Prague Communiqué*, and proved its importance throughout the follow-up period 2001- 2003. Two seminars were organized specifically to explore this issue. The first was the "Seminar on the Social Dimensions of the Higher Education Area" organized by the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religion Affairs in Athens on 19-20 February 2003. Lively discussions focused mainly on analysis of various social dimensions of the European Higher Education Area but in particular on the notion of higher education as a public responsibility and a public good, as well as on the position of (national) higher education in the GATS negotiations. The seminar attracted about 150 participants: students, academics, experts, representatives from national ministries and international organizations. Their unanimous conclusion was that the *Prague Communiqué*'s emphasis on the social dimension of the EHEA was legitimate, and that the *Berlin Communiqué* must follow up this dimension and pay even greater attention to the different elements involved.

The second event about this topic was a seminar on "Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education" organized by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and planned together with ESIB and the Norwegian national unions of students, NSU and StL. The seminar took place in Oslo on 12-14 June 2003. Participants looked at student participation in Europe in a historic as well as in a contemporary perspective; they discussed in depth the legislative, decision-making and system-improvement aspects of student participation as well as case studies and best practice from various countries and/or organizations. Based on discussions from previous events, participants argued that students should be treated as partners in higher education and not (only) as consumers. They discussed the impact of internationalization on student participation, and sought to define the motivation for participation in governance. In these discussions, a detailed survey on student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe was very helpful; this survey was commissioned from the Council of Europe by the Norwegian Ministry of Education especially for this seminar.

16. *Lifelong Learning* is another topic stressed in the *Prague Communiqué* of 2001, thus broadening the list of action lines of the Bologna process. The Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Czech Technical University in Prague organized a seminar on "Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning" (Prague, 5-7 June 2003) to discuss systematically related concepts in European higher education, in particular the validation of education and credits gained outside formal higher education study programmes and courses. The starting point of the seminar was that higher education is no longer a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The full complexity of the issue was explored, from searching for a common denominator in various definitions to an analysis of the concrete characteristics of lifelong learning. The seminar shed new light on lifelong learning's flexible paths and their relationship to (traditional) qualification frameworks, on the various issues of quality and recognition of prior (non-traditional, etc.) learning, and on the use of various tools (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, portfolios, etc.). Productive connections were found with the work done in

previous seminars; Lifelong learning should not be treated as an isolated subject but as an important, integral part of the Process, involving all appropriate stakeholders in creating a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. This framework should encompass the full range of lifelong learning paths, opportunities and techniques, and should make appropriate use of ECTS credits.

2.1.2 Contributions by the EU Commission

17. The European Commission has the special status of an additional full member in the Bologna process, which was originally initiated as an intergovernmental process. Since the goals of the Process and their realization are inseparably linked with the tough everyday realities of higher education at the institutional level, and also with co-ordination and enhancing of activities at the international level, the Process has not been exclusively intergovernmental from the very beginning. Geographically, the map of signatory countries also exceeds EU member countries. However, the approaching EU enlargement in the context of the developing knowledge society, overall developments on the Old Continent, and complex relations with other parts of the world argued firmly in favour of the Commission's special status in the structures of the Bologna process.

The Bologna action lines coincide with EU policy in higher education, well known to the broad – and not only academic! – European public through programmes such as Socrates/Erasmus, Tempus, Cards, etc. As already mentioned (see above, **04**), the Bologna process also fits as closely as possible into the broader agenda defined by the Heads of States and Governments at a meeting of the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000, setting for Europe "a new strategic goal for the next decade" and stressing the importance of "establishing a European Area of Research and Innovation" as well as "education and training for living and working in the knowledge society". From the point of view of (not only) higher education, these aims were confirmed in a more profiled way in Barcelona two years later, this time setting "the objective of making these educative and training systems a world quality reference by 2010". These statements closely correspond to those from the *Bologna Declaration* and the *Prague Communiqué*[6].

18. In 2002 and 2003, the Directorate General (D.G.) of Education and Culture released successive *Progress Reports* that offered a systemic review of its various and continuous activities and measures to the members of BFUG, BPG and other interested individuals. They relate to all action lines of the Bologna process as well as to the monitoring and reporting activities and to concrete Bologna follow-up events. In most cases, the Commission is implementing measures in direct partnership with the higher education sector of the EU member and associate countries but also other countries. Today, the Community programme Socrates (within its framework particularly Erasmus) is a widely known promoter of the developmental projects (**35**) and of the continuous increase of students' and teachers' mobility in European higher education. It is worth mentioning here again the celebration of the one-millionth Erasmus student in the course of academic year 2002-2003. On this occasion, in October 2002, the "Socrates-Erasmus Student Charter" was launched; this is a card stating clearly the rights and obligations of mobile students.

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[6] E.g.: "A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space." The Ministers stated the "objectives, which we consider to be of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide". *Bologna Declaration*, 1999. – Comp. also *Presidency Conclusions*, Lisbon European Council, 23-24 March 2000 (5, 12, 25); Barcelona European Council, 15-16 March 2002 (43).

Socrates-Erasmus is also the main mechanism for the promotion of ECTS and the large-scale introduction of the Diploma Supplement. Exploratory projects have also been launched in 2002, aimed at expanding the ECTS experience to lifelong learning. With regard to employability, an important data-base for job and learning opportunities (PLOTEUS, 2002) was set up to help graduates and citizens find their own way in the European education offer.

Measures to promote European co-operation in quality assurance are also high on the agenda. For example, a special "bottom-up" pilot scheme to promote quality culture within universities (50 institutions selected) was launched anew, again in co-operation with the EUA, to introduce internal quality assurance mechanisms and to prepare for external evaluations. Along the same lines, another pilot scheme on European higher education quality evaluation – "Transnational European Evaluation Pilot" or TEEP – was created in 2002, with 15 universities, in collaboration with the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). More initiatives of this kind exist, and some of them will be described later (**38**, **39**, **40**).

19. Besides the well-known and today almost routine mobility schemes, growing thematic networks, quality assurance co-operation, e-learning opportunities, developing databases, etc., some new and challenging pilot projects have recently been launched with important support from the Commission. They contribute greatly – and will contribute even more in the near future – to the development of the Bologna process. In the period between Prague and Berlin, a project called "*Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*" (**36**) produced its first results, immediately attracting much public interest. The *Tuning* results were highly appreciated, in particular at the Bologna follow-up seminars. In the same vein, a series of newly launched European Masters and joint Doctoral Courses should be mentioned (**37**). The pilot project, organized by the EUA and well promoted in media, started in September 2002. Systemic support for new Masters courses is also foreseen in the proposed *Erasmus World*, another project that attracts the attention of the European and world higher education scene and the media. *Erasmus World* aims to develop a European higher education "product" providing both European students and scholars as well as students and invited scholars from third countries with added value. Host European postgraduate courses will be selected for a five-year period. At the end of the programme in 2008, around 250 "EU Master Courses" are expected to be established.

At the start of 2003, the EU Commission initiated a debate on the role of universities and other higher education institutions within the knowledge society and economy in Europe. A 23-page communication was sent to all interested parties, inviting them to discuss dilemmas, problems and possible solutions common to policy makers and institutions. The fundamental question in the communication – "Can the European universities, as they are organized now, hope in future to retain their place in society and in the world?" – is also the fundamental question of the Bologna process (**23**).

2.1.3 Contributions by the Council of Europe

20. The Council of Europe is an important contributor to the Bologna process, in several ways. Formally, it is an observer in the structures of the process (on BFUG as well as on the BPG) and the process benefited greatly from its irreplaceable international role based on specific traditions and particular references. The Council also provided support within BPG and BFUG, taking over the development of some studies and papers. First and foremost, the Council of Europe has recently taken on the distinguished role of a bridge between those countries party to the Bologna process and the remaining European countries – in principle, signatories of the European Cultural Convention – that may benefit from the Process but that are not (yet) party to it. Traditionally, the Council has offered a platform for debate between Ministry and academic representatives, through the double composition of representatives in its *Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research* (CD-ESR). The Committee comprises delegates from 48 States party to the European Cultural Convention, as well as observers from other countries, IGOs and NGOs active in the field of higher education, notably the EUA and ESIB. The Council of Europe is also an important actor in recognition issues (together with UNESCO, most meritorious for the adoption of Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1997).

Based on an overall assessment of the Bologna process activities, the 2002 CD-ESR plenary session discussed possible future activities. The present activities will continue, but CD-ESR also identified three additional areas of possible further contribution to the Bologna process. They are (1) the issue of higher education as a public responsibility and a public good, (2) aspects of university autonomy, and (3) the role of legislation in the creation of the EHEA. All three are related to projects and activities in which the Council of Europe has already proved its good sense and vitality.

21. As a part of the October 2002 plenary session of the CD-ESR a well-attended *round table debate on the Bologna process* was organized; it was one of those events of the period between Prague and Berlin with the highest representation (43 European and 2 observer countries, 7 IGOs and NGOs as well as numerous individual experts). Seven panellists presented their views, for example on internal and external dimensions of the Process as well as on its enlargement; on the importance of a closer link between recognition and quality assurance; on concrete co-operation between ENIC and NARIC Networks and ENQA; on Master's Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe; on university autonomy in relation to the Process, and on the special issue of "faculty autonomy" in some countries of South Eastern Europe.[7]

Governmental as well as academic representatives from most countries took part in a debate raising many substantial issues, making comments and concrete proposals. The issue of higher education as a public good was discussed in close relation to the issue of democratic values; the importance of higher education as a public responsibility was stressed. Attention was called to the terminology; the term "public good" often seems to be used in the vague and misleading sense of "free of charge". Further, the discussion pointed to transnational education providers and to the importance of dealing with the situation of private institutions in the Bologna process. The special weight of ratification of the Lisbon Convention in relation to both "Bologna" and the GATS issue was confirmed, as well as the role and responsibility of higher education institutions with regard to recognition. The potential risk of provoking brain drain in developing countries, and potential areas of conflict within the Process (for example between employability and mobility, between mobility and public good, between academic quality standards and employability) were also explored. A firm connection needs to be established between mobility and quality standards, and information about the Bologna process needs to be spread more widely to all levels of higher education systems. The group also asked for a stronger focus on Doctoral studies within the common EHEA. A proposal was made to clarify the *legal* consequences of the Bologna process, preferably through a special seminar devoted to this issue. In addition, a need was expressed to supervise the Process and assess its progress; otherwise its status and influence could diminish.

In its conclusion, the CD-ESR approved the report for the Lisbon seminar on recognition issues (see above, **12**) and adopted the recommendations made in this report. It encouraged the ENIC Network to pursue its co-operation with the NARIC Network and ENQA, searching for synergies between quality assurance and recognition. It also encouraged the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee to consider adopting a subsidiary text to the Convention on the recognition of joint qualifications, while it encouraged delegations to initiate a review of national legislation to make the development of joint programmes possible and to remove indirect obstacles to joint programmes and qualifications (**70**).

22. The Council of Europe and its representatives made important contributions to all the events between Prague and Berlin. It provided the Rapporteur for two Bologna seminars, and presentations for most of the others, in addition to organizing the April 2002 seminar with the Portuguese authorities. As for the formal structures of the Process, their share in the *ad hoc* working group proposing criteria for further accessions to the Bologna process as well as for setting milestones and taking stock of progress towards the "Bologna goals" for new members should be stressed. One

[7] Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR), *Meeting Report. 1st plenary session*. Strasbourg, 3-4 October 2002, pp. 8-13.

particularly important contribution refers to a number of seminars on the Bologna process in the countries that have not yet joined officially.

Some of these seminars took place in South-Eastern Europe (**54**, **55**). In the autumn of 2002 there were three important events: a national Bologna seminar for Albania in Tirana, a similar seminar for Bosnia and Herzegovina, including a special session on the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and finally a conference on quality assurance in higher education in Belgrade, organized jointly with the EUA, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Association of Serbian Universities. This support continued in early 2003 with a national Bologna seminar in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Skopje, February 2003), and a national seminar on the recognition of qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Banja Luka, April 2003). In addition, advice on higher education legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" was organized; in Bosnia and Herzegovina the Council actually plays the lead role in developing a framework law for higher education. In December 2002, the Council of Europe was a co-organizer – together with the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, the Committee for Education and Sciences of the State Duma, and St. Petersburg State University – of the international seminar "Integration of the Russian higher school into the European zone of higher education: Perspectives and Problems". This was the first Bologna seminar for high-level representatives of Russian higher education, which probably represents another important landmark on the way toward a common European higher education area. The achievements of those events will be highlighted later (**56**). The Council of Europe has also made important contributions to the discussions of the UNESCO Global Forum and related meetings (**57-59**).

2.1.4 EUA Contributions

23. In the preparation for the Prague Ministerial Conference in 2001, the EUA Convention in Salamanca played an extraordinarily important role. The EUA in general, and various activities of individual universities and higher education institutions in particular, have also been influential during the period 2001–2003. EUA's contributions during this period are numerous and wide-ranging: they arch from Council meetings and animation of internal discussions on main issues with members institutions, through active involvement in the work of BFUG and BPG (as an observer) as well as participation in the official follow-up seminars, to launching pilot projects with help from EC Socrates Programme, coordinating ECTS and DS counsellors, etc. In this context, the *Trends III Report* is not to be missed. At some other points in this Report special emphasis is given to particular projects and activities (see e.g. **37**, **38**), but here a special mention should be given to the EUA Convention in Graz (Austria) in May 2003, which formed the peak of activities for this period and was an important advance in the Bologna process.

The 2nd Convention of European Higher Education institutions "Strengthening the Role of Institutions" was the result of long and broad preparatory work centred on key "Bologna" topics of special importance for universities. Internally, the EUA started working for the Convention soon after the Prague Summit, involving its official bodies and members in collective preparation. Early in 2002, the EUA Council already adopted "Graz themes" to be discussed thoroughly at further Council meetings and Conferences. During this preparation work, in the spring of 2003, EUA also adopted a reply to the EC communication on "The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge" which constituted another collective framework for Graz discussions.

24. The Convention was held from 29-31 May 2003 in Graz, Austria, organized by EUA and hosted jointly by the three universities in Graz: the Karl-Franzens University, the Graz University of Technology and the University of Art and Music. The Graz Convention highlighted the role of higher education institutions in driving reform at European level through the Bologna process. With about 600 higher education leaders from across Europe, students and numerous guests from governmental and international organizations the Convention was *the biggest and most influential event of this period*, which strengthened the role of the institutions in the creation of the EHEA and formulated a

coherent message from higher education institutions. It provided an excellent opportunity for universities, students and their different partners to take stock of the developments of the last two years and to debate priority issues for future action. Mrs. V. Reding, EU Commissioner for Education and Culture, addressed participants at the opening, and Mr. P. Busquin, EU Commissioner for Research, at the closing of the Convention. In plenary, a draft version of the *Trends III Report*, also conducted by EUA, was presented for the first time.

The main debates at the Convention were spread over 12 working groups and covered five relevant themes: (1) European higher education in a globalized world, (2) Re-visiting the links between higher education and research, (3) Consolidating a quality culture in Europe's universities, (4) Improving institutional governance and management, and (5) Pushing forward Bologna and Prague. These themes reflected the clear need to set priorities in the Bologna process especially with regard to institutions, to identify the next steps and to consolidate the long-term vision for universities in Europe. Debates in the working groups were also a good indicator of how EUA members see their own responsibilities in these activities.

25. The Convention affirmed that its common vision is *a Europe of knowledge based on strong research and research-based education in universities across the continent.* It recognized diversity as a strong asset and a base for a common cultural and civic European identity; at the same time, diversity and cultural richness make European higher education attractive for students, scientists and scholars from other parts of the world. European universities are well aware of their crucial role in providing social and economic welfare but also in the cultural development of their societies. They are able to compete on a global scale and to foster excellence; but they do not forget the role of higher education in enhancing social cohesion, the importance of equal access, etc. The Bologna process is a stimulus to take a close look at modern higher education in all its dimensions, but it also requires a search for broad consensus on proposed changes. At the governmental or institutional level, reforms should avoid being dogmatic or prescriptive. Commitments of partners in a voluntary process have been an essential element of the Process since its beginning; and they form a sound basis for further progress.

Participants felt strongly that with the increased differentiation of their mission, universities must ensure that their graduates at all levels have been exposed to a research environment and to research-based training. Higher education institutions accept the two-tier system and other goals of the Bologna process; they know well their particular liabilities in curricular reform, they jointly develop new contents and tools and share good practice, as was demonstrated at the Zürich seminar on credit transfer and accumulation and later on other occasions. At the same time, however, the Convention affirmed *a need to upgrade the Process towards a three-tier system.* The Doctoral level should be conceived as the third cycle, and – together with post-doctoral study – seen as an integral part of the European Higher Education Area, integrated with the European Research Area. A broad consensus was reached that the Process now enters a phase when strengthening the role of institutions will be decisive for success.

Many other issues were highlighted in the working groups and at the plenary sessions which relate to findings from follow-up seminars and other "Bologna" events. It is not possible to cover them here more extensively. After the Convention, a general report was prepared and submitted to the EUA Council, based on documents prepared in advance, plenary presentations, group discussion reports, and various comments made directly to the organizer. The Council adopted the *Graz Declaration* "Forward from Berlin: the Role of Universities" as one of the documents to be presented directly at the Berlin Summit.

2.1.5 EURASHE Contributions

26. EURASHE, the European association of institutions in higher education, is also recognized as an observer, both in BFUG and BPG. Today, professional higher education institutions (colleges,

polytechnics, etc.), as distinct from universities, form an important part of tertiary education. In Europe there are 1.7 million students in tertiary short-cycle programmes, and more than 800 000 in post-secondary education. Through its active contribution in BFUG and BPG as well as at follow-up seminars and other events, EURASHE has presented specific aspects and concerns that are essential to a complete understanding of key issues.

EURASHE's recent activity culminated at the 13th Annual Conference held in June 2003 in Gyöngyös, Hungary. The title of the conference, "The Assets of the Bologna Process for Professional Higher Education", reflects the particular position of institutions of professional higher education in the follow-up process. They definitely belong to the emerging EHEA, offering a wide variety of Bachelor degrees – in some countries even Master degrees – and putting strong emphasis on social relevance and practical preparation of students for the reality of the world of work. Clearly these institutions also play a part in implementing the two-tier structure throughout Europe.

With regard to the two-tier structure, EURASHE draws particular attention to the existing short-cycle higher education, stressing that it constitutes a large and important sector in many European countries which should be fully taken into consideration in the Bologna process. A typical issue that broadened the follow-up discussion on mobility is *the issue of trainee placements*. Since trainee periods are an important and integral part of a large number of these programmes, facilitation of trainee placements should also find an appropriate place within measures to strengthen international mobility. Along similar lines, discussions on short-cycle higher education pointed to another "obstacle to mobility": namely, *barriers and obstacles between levels of (higher) education*. Finally, on an optimistic note, the special strength of this sector in lifelong learning was often stated.

The Plenary Council at the meeting in Gyöngyös approved the *EURASHE Policy Statement*. It affirms that EURASHE will continue to strengthen its role as the representative body of the professional higher education sector within an inclusive and open EHEA. In the gradual process of creating the EHEA, priority will be given to the creation of networking structures and mechanisms among professional higher education institutions, universities, and other higher education institutions as well as to further improvement and enlargement of co-operation with stakeholders, especially students, business and industry. EURASHE believes that these measures are necessary to further improve quality control mechanisms, to develop curricula and programmes with continued relevance to the labour market, to elaborate new teaching and learning methods in aspects of life-long learning and the social dimension of education, and to encourage and facilitate development of joint Bachelor, Master and research programmes.

27. At its Gyöngyös meeting EURASHE promoted the *Survey of Tertiary Short-Cycle Education in Europe*[8] as its particular contribution to the follow-up process between Prague and Berlin. The survey defines tertiary short-cycle education with regard to existing sub-degree education in European countries. While the Bologna process has led to a substantial body of documentation about first- and second-cycle higher education, this particular sector remained unclear. Now, this gap is filled by a most comprehensive, up-to-date presentation of this sector, which could well be used as the main reference in comparative discussions. To some extent, it is a sector-specific document parallel to the *Trends III Report*: a survey also based on questionnaires (in four major languages).

The study encompasses brief reviews from each of "Bologna" countries and a general analysis presenting the organization of tertiary short-cycle education, entrance requirements, duration and certification of studies, profile of students and teachers, use of ECTS and DS, mobility, quality assessment and accreditation, transition to degree studies, organization of post-secondary education and examples of good practice. The general analysis ends with conclusions and recommendations that synthesize all main aspects of the sector in relation to the Bologna process. Findings of this study

[8] Kirsch, M., Beernaert, Y., Nørgaard, S., *Tertiary Short Cycle Education in Europe. A comparative study*. Brussels: EURASHE, May 2003.

argue clearly for encompassing the totality of *tertiary education* (a term as used in OECD studies and elsewhere[9]) in the EHEA context. On the other hand, new structures that are being developed as part of the Bologna process (e.g. qualification frameworks, mobility, ECTS and DS, competence portfolios, quality assurance, etc.) should include specific references to tertiary short-cycle education. Last but not least, the study recommends more in-depth research in this field.

2.1.6 ESIB Contributions

28. Student organizations have been particularly active partners in the Process during the follow-up period 2001–2003. There were no official Bologna follow-up seminars without student representatives, and they have always contributed competently and constructively to seminar results. Numerous national and international activities have been well co-ordinated through ESIB as the students' representative at the European level. ESIB is the umbrella organization of 50 National Unions of Students across 37 European countries; through these members, ESIB represents more than 11 million students. It developed its own higher education policy statements even before the Bologna conference in 1999, but later – in particular after the Prague meeting in 2001 where ESIB was officially invited as an observer – they acquired a higher profile and more recognition. Today, there is no key theme within the Bologna process that has not been discussed in the framework of European student organizations. As a result, ESIB produced a set of valuable policy documents and conclusions.

Soon after the Prague Summit, in October 2001, an ESIB Board Meeting discussed student involvement in quality assurance, while the Convention in November 2001 centered on the important theme of social dimensions of the Bologna process. In 2002, two important structural topics were considered: recognition issues and student perspectives on trans-national education. Two more meetings focused on the European dimension, discussing the future of EU in the context of higher education and the students' vision of a common Europe.

However, the most "student-relevant" theme on this list is surely the one on social dimensions. This is the theme where the ESIB contributed greatly to having it included in the list of "Bologna action lines" at the Prague Summit 2001. ESIB's 3rd European Student Convention in November 2001 discussed this issue, and adopted the *Brussels Student Declaration*, stating that creating a genuine European Higher Education Area requires more than educational, structural and institutional changes. What is really important is access to higher education on an equitable basis. The *Declaration* defines "social dimension" as the struggle for the creation of a democratic and inclusive higher education, and for the promotion of student well-being in order to ensure that students are able to excel in their studies and become active citizens. Coherent governmental social educational policy is needed in this area, not only during higher education *but also before*. The success of higher education heavily depends on high-quality prior education, providing students with fundamental knowledge and core skills. The *Declaration* also stresses that "explicit" selection mechanisms should be eliminated; selection should above all be non-discriminatory, not based on any grounds other than acquired knowledge. ESIB rejects the idea of students as consumers that purchase a product. In a critical reference to GATS negotiations, it states that education is a human right and that human rights can never be "trade-able". The *Declaration* argues that co-operation rather than competition should be the guiding principle for the enhancement of student well-being.

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[9] In this context, *tertiary education* is defined as "a level or stage of studies beyond secondary education. Such studies are undertaken in tertiary education institutions, such as public and private universities, colleges, and polytechnics, and also in a wide range of other settings, such as secondary schools, work sites, and via free-standing information technology-based offerings and a host of public and private entities." – Wagner, A., "Lifelong Learning in the University: a New Imperative?" In: Hirsch, W. and Weber, L. (eds.), *Challenges Facing Higher Education at the Millennium*. Phoenix: American Council on Education – Oryx Press, 1999, p. 135.

29. Finally, as their most important meeting during this period, the 5th European student convention was held in Athens, 21st-23rd February 2003 in association with the Greek Presidency of the EU. Under the heading "*How to achieve genuine student mobility*" – one of the key issues of the Bologna process – the Convention brought together 150 student representatives from 40 European countries to formulate part of ESIB's input towards the Berlin Summit 2003, as well as ESIB's response to the European Commission's public consultation on the future of the Socrates programme. The Convention discussed student mobility from several aspects: social and economical aspects, access to mobility, horizontal and vertical mobility and e-Mobility.

The Convention produced a *Communiqué* which emphasizes the multiple benefits of study abroad but also deals with a number of factors that limit and hinder genuine student mobility and need to be progressively removed to achieve a higher participation rate in mobility schemes. ESIB reaffirms its principal opposition to any tuition fees; in particular it states that fees for foreign students must not be higher than fees for domestic students. The document refers not only to "systemically organized" mobile students (e.g. Erasmus), but also to the so-called "free movers" who have somehow been forgotten in recent discussions. Visas and residence permits are still a problem that should be reconsidered again by national governments. However, the main issue in enhancing student mobility is a demand to develop and improve the social-economical systems and, in particular, to dévelop mechanisms at the European level to counterbalance inequalities.

The *Communiqué* draws special attention to students with disabilities, students with children and students with other special requirements, but also students from South East and Eastern Europe who have very limited chances to apply for mobility programmes. When a student comes to another country, he/she has to be fully integrated into the new academic and social community. The Convention stressed that new counselling services and tutoring programmes are needed, but other aspects also need to improve: accommodation, health care systems, the same employment rights as domestic students, etc. The document further refers to language issues: students are convinced that introducing (more) study courses in widely spoken languages would increase mobility, and that language courses for mobility students should be free of charge. ESIB stresses that the impact of two-cycle degree structures on vertical and horizontal mobility needs to be closely monitored and assessed. For horizontal mobility, these structures will need to be sufficiently flexible, while for vertical mobility, two-cycle degrees will possibly have a positive effect. Finally, the *Communiqué* confirms the obvious benefits of *e*-learning in the context of higher education, but warns against a technology gap between different regions in and beyond Europe. It also states that *e*-learning must not be seen as a replacement for physical mobility but rather as a complement to it.

2.1.7 Bologna activities at national, institutional and subject-specific levels

30. Any attempt to report on the numerous "Bologna activities" at national and institutional levels would be doomed to remain incomplete. However, BFUG called upon Bologna signatories – as well as new applicants – to prepare system reports on implantation efforts and improvements in national higher education systems, and to submit these to BPG to be edited on the official Berlin Summit web site. Obviously, countries wished their reports to be as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible, and therefore most texts could be presented only in late spring and early summer 2003 when this report had already been finalized.

National reports offer an extremely useful enlargement of the picture given by the *Trends III Report*. A high degree of correspondence between national higher education reforms and "Bologna" action lines is evident. Almost all countries report on establishing "Bologna co-ordination groups" and on organizing national "Bologna events". This is an important extension of the Bologna process in the period between the Prague and Berlin Summits; the awareness of the emerging common EHEA has increased considerably, and national processes have been better co-ordinated with pan-European trends. Countries also paid attention to improved information: some developed special communication tools and set up special "national Bologna web sites" (e.g. Austria, Denmark). In particular, countries

improved public information about their higher education systems, providing basic legislation translated into widely spoken languages (national legislation for some countries is now also available from the official Berlin Summit web site). Facts and figures on higher education institutions, mobility, and financing, but also information about future plans and reform initiatives are included. Some countries also decided to organize international events (e.g. a well-attended seminar on flexible learning paths in higher education, organized by the Ministry of the Flemish Community in Brussels in February 2003) which supplemented the official follow-up seminars at a suitable level and could be a model of good practice for the next follow-up period.

It is *strongly recommended that national reporting becomes a constant feature* in the Bologna process: such reports bring much-needed update information that is an important source for experts preparing analyses and proposals. They also strengthen commitment and mutual trust. However, in further follow-up periods, more standardization – at least some common methodology – for reporting could be very productive. At present, comparative approaches to a variety of collected material are often difficult, and since not all reports are available by a common deadline, it is not possible to make full use of their potential added value.

Last but not least, BFUG discussed very carefully whether the further run of the Process towards the goals stated for 2010 is possible at all without continuous reporting on individual countries' progress with regard to commonly agreed action lines (see **49-51**).

31. National reports from most countries contain interesting information about *lively activities at the level of higher education institutions and in student organizations*. Here, the important role of EUA, EURASHE and ESIB in stimulating these activities should also be stressed. As can be seen from these reports – complemented by other sources and further confirmed by the *Trends III Report* – in the follow-up period 2001-2003 the so-called "Bologna co-ordinators" and/or "co-ordination groups" have also begun to work at the institutional level. Still, it seems that only a minor share of institutions[10], and not in all signatory countries, decided to strengthen their Bologna agendas in this way. Again, this good practice of institutional Bologna co-ordination groups should be warmly recommended for the next follow-up period 2003-2005 when strength at the institutional level will be even more needed.

Moreover, universities and other higher education institutions, national and institutional student organizations are becoming aware that round tables, debates and communication on various "Bologna" issues are meaningful and productive in relation to their own national and local problems. And in a growing number of cases, other stakeholders – employers and social partners in particular – take part in these discussions and communications; in this context, we should mention the commitment to the Process and the wide-spread international activities of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE).

32. Probably the clearest proof that the Bologna process has now reached the *concrete level of subject-specific study areas* comes from the growing number of reports and communications from specialized organizations, academic and professional associations, networks, various formal and informal initiative groups, etc. Here also, we witness an extremely wide spectrum of activities and initiatives (some links to respective web sites can be found via the official Berlin Summit web page). It is impossible to review them all here in the limited frame of this report; therefore, only a few specific cases will be given to illustrate their dimension, frequency, weight and importance while bibliographical and website sources are given later (see *chapter 4*) for a more comprehensive picture.

An excellent example was set by two distinguished associations in engineering, the Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research (CESAER) and the European Society for Engineering Education (SEFI), who organized a seminar at Helsinki University of

[10] According to Trends III Report, "only 47% of universities and only 29.5% of other HEIs have created the position of a Bologna coordinator" (draft summary, p. 3; first draft, p. 27).

Technology in February 2003 to discuss issues in *engineering higher education and research in the perspective of a common EHEA* and also agreed on a joint *Communication on the Bologna Declaration*. In their *Communication*, CESAER and SEFI strongly support the idea of the creation of EHEA. Basically, they also support the adoption of a system based on two main cycles, but also added that the specific needs of engineering education should be properly taken into account. CESAER and SEFI draw attention to the two existing, distinct types of engineering curricula in Europe – one longer, more scientifically oriented and the other shorter, more application or vocationally oriented – both serving particular needs and well accepted in the job market. They state that there must continue to be provision for an integrated route through to the Master level, as this preserves the coherence and efficiency of professional preparation in engineering. From that point of view, they regard first-cycle degrees more as a stepping stone for specialization and/or transfer to the second cycle.

The CESAER and SEFI *Communication* shows that more attention should be given in the next follow-up period to the particular questions of implementing "Bologna" principles in specific study areas and professional fields. However, along with raising new questions and problems, reports usually express strong commitment to all main principles. There is a sound agreement that an EHEA would also strongly contribute to the attractiveness of particular study and research areas, as (e.g.) engineering certainly is. There is also a clear awareness, sometimes even more clear than at the national level, that new curricula couldn't be designed without a productive partnership with industry. Appeals to extend "two-tier" discussions also to the Doctorate level – noted also in the EUA framework and at some follow-up seminars – have also been heard frequently, on the grounds that doctoral students play a crucial role in research and a special role in inter-linking teaching and research at institutions. The need to strive for quality and excellence is also frequently expressed.

33. Similar cases in other subjects also illustrate this trend. One good example comes from "the opposite side" – the arts. Two organizations, the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) and Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), organized a seminar "*Bologna – A European space for talented young artists?*" on 10-11 April 2003 in Vienna. The seminar's objective was to discuss the specific implications of the Bologna Process for the arts, to exchange views on the European dimension in higher arts education, and to inform national ministries and European organizations about the positions, debates and initiatives in higher arts education and in professional music training. The meeting was organized in the framework of the Socrates Thematic Network "Innovation in Higher Arts Education in Europe". Strong student participation was possible thanks to an ELIA grant from the European Cultural Foundation. ELIA and the AEC represent more than 550 higher arts education institutes across Europe, providing higher education in architecture, art, dance, design, media arts, music and theatre, for more than 200 000 students annually.

In their position paper, launched and discussed at the conference, participants strongly support the Bologna process. It emphasizes that a better integrated European space of higher education should also seek to retain cultural diversity, and that arts education must be recognized as functioning up to and including higher education level in all European countries. Participants agreed that many qualities in the arts are shared with other disciplines but also pointed to the features that make teaching and learning in higher arts education a unique and different experience, like focusing on creation and presentation of works of art in teaching, learning and evaluation. The position paper also analyzes main Bologna action lines from the perspective of the arts, and supports trends to improve transparency and comparability. It stresses in particular the importance of quality assurance in arts education, and the idea of that individual creative development is fundamental to higher arts education. ELIA/AEC are opposed to using the outcome of quality assurance processes for the ranking of individual institutions, but support the creation of informative profiles of higher arts education institutions. They also emphasize a need to build quality assurance and enhancement on mutual trust among institutions, using processes such as peer review and self-evaluation and providing effective support for institutions towards maintaining and raising standards. ELIA/AEC also support the implementation of the two-cycle system, providing students with professional qualifications at both levels. Within the Socrates thematic network 'Innovation in higher arts education in Europe', they are

currently surveying the implications of the two-cycle structure, and developing initiatives in quality assurance, mobility, transparency, specific descriptors for art disciplines, and joint Master courses.

34. Many other joint institutional projects have identified Bologna issues in various fields of study (mostly in the context of Socrates-Erasmus Thematic Networks). These cases cannot be fully presented here, but we will give two examples.

The first refers to the annual general *European Law Faculties Association* (ELFA) meeting in February 2003 which dealt with "New directions in European legal education: Credible, credited and continuing legal education", with particular reference to the application of ECTS in legal studies in European countries. A special panel discussion on the developments in the Bologna process was an excellent occasion for participants to exchange views on national perceptions of the Process in relation to legal studies. ELFA, which also adopted a special *Statement on Bologna* in May 2002, is already planning another interesting conference on "Quality assurance, assessment and accreditation in European Law Schools: Comparative approaches in the light of the Bologna process", to be held in 2004. Interestingly, the system and method of assessment of students feature prominently on the draft agenda, and marking methods and scales, group exams, projects and essays as well as ECTS and Diploma Supplements will be discussed.

The second example refers to a group of eight universities from seven EU member and associate countries joined in an Erasmus project EUDORA (formerly EDIL), also related to the *Tuning* project. It deals with the issue of joint degrees (Doctorates) in education and teacher education, and also carried out a small survey of "Bologna" effects, state of affairs and expectations in education sciences and teacher education. A report has been prepared (based on answers from institutions from almost all "Bologna" countries) which allows some comparison to the more general *Trends III Report* from the perspective of this subject-specific area.[11] The EUDORA project is closely linked also to the Thematic Network on Teacher Education (TNTEE), a flexible multilingual trans-national forum for the development of teacher education in Europe funded by the EC.

Both examples prove clearly that the Bologna process has reached the level of institutions, and that particular study fields offer some new – usually very concrete – perspectives; but they also raise some new problems to be solved in the next follow-up period. Other cases go beyond the level of institutional or study-field co-operation, and spread out into specialized networks and interesting developmental projects. These should be analyzed separately.

2.1.8 Networking, pilot projects and development

35. Project co-operation between European universities and higher education institutions has been growing very fast during the last decade, along with the rapid increase in mobility. Of course, both dimensions are inter-connected and in both cases the incentives of the Socrates programme – as well as Tempus for associate and other countries – have been immense. Today, European higher education systems are creatively connected and densely interwoven through numerous networks and joint development projects. On the one hand, experiences gained from co-operation in Socrates-Erasmus Thematic Networks, ECTS and other pilot projects are relevant for all institutions in all countries; on the other hand, institutions know how to use these experiences to design new projects on a higher level. It is simply impossible here to give even a brief survey of these extremely wide-ranging activities; however, a few examples can illustrate trends.

36. In the summer of 2000, a group of universities - co-ordinated by the University of Deusto, Spain and the University of Groningen, The Netherlands - has taken up the Bologna challenge collectively

[11] See www.pa-linz.ac.at/international/Alert/Tntee/Tntee_publication/menu.htm

and designed a comprehensive pilot project that is widely known today as *Tuning*[12] ("Tuning educational structures in Europe"). The EUA helped to widen the group of participants and the EC granted support in the framework of the Socrates programme. Some 100 institutions participated in Phase I of the project (2000-2002), representing the EU and EEA countries, organized in the following seven subject areas: *Business Administration, Education Sciences, Geology, History, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry*. Phase II of the *Tuning* project – 2003-2004; launched in Brussels in May 2003 – intends (1) to consolidate its findings together with stakeholders (professional associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, etc.); (2) extend its scope to pre-accession and candidate countries (the group has been enlarged with another 30 institutions of which 15 come from EU acceding and candidate countries) as well as to two new subject areas (*European Studies* as an inter-disciplinary and *Nursing* as a professionally oriented discipline); and (3) transfer its methodology to the Socrates-Erasmus Thematic Networks. Special attention in Phase II is given to the role of learning, teaching, assessment and performance in relation to quality assurance and evaluation.

Tuning addresses several action lines of the Bologna process, notably the adoption of a system of readable and comparable degrees, the adoption of a system based on two cycles, and the establishment of a system of credits. As already mentioned, its findings and concrete proposals have made important contributions to many issues discussed at official Bologna follow-up seminars. During Phase I, the main aim of *Tuning* was to design an appropriate methodology and identify points of reference for generic and subject-specific competences of first- and second-cycle graduates. Results of this phase are now available to academia and the wider public through a double web site.[13] The starting point of the project was the idea that competences describe learning *outcomes*: what a learner knows or is able to do after completing a learning process. This concerns both *subject specific competences* and *generic competences*, like communication skills, leadership, etc. Competences are described as "points of reference" for curriculum design and evaluation; they still allow flexibility and autonomy in the construction of curricula. In the context of the Bologna process, descriptions of competences also provide a *common language for describing what curricula are aiming at*. A more general ambition of *Tuning* is to become a platform for the exchange of experience and knowledge among European countries, higher education institutions and staff with regard to the implementation of the Bologna process at Europe-wide level. Thus it can play an important role in the further construction of the EHEA.

37. Another well known project in this area is *the Joint Masters' Project* launched by the EUA in September 2002 (and sponsored through EC Socrates programme) as a part of its Action Plan in support of the emerging EHEA. At the launch conference, EUA stated that a great deal of attention has focused upon convergence of higher education structures and the introduction of Bachelors and Masters degrees, but that so far little attempt has been made to examine actual co-operation among European universities. The *Joint Masters' Project* is intended to fill that gap, perfectly timed just when academic communities were awaiting the launch of *Erasmus World*. The current discussion about degree structures and the importance attached to compatible qualifications at the undergraduate and postgraduate level across Europe need practical tests, and this project can help answer some key

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[12] "The name *Tuning* has been chosen for the project to reflect the idea that universities do not look for harmonisation of their degree programmes or any sort of unified, prescriptive or definitive European curricula but simply for points of reference, convergence and common understanding. The protection of the rich diversity of European education has been paramount in the Tuning project from the very start and the project in no way seeks to restrict the independence of academic and subject specialists, or damage local and national academic authority." See http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/tuning.html

[13] University of Deusto http://www.relint.deusto.es/TUNINGProject/index.htm and University of Groningen http://www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm

questions. Parallel to the launch of the project, EUA also presented a comparative study on Masters Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe.[14]

The project is based on partnerships among at least three universities from three different countries, and on existing student and staff mobility among participating institutions. Masters' programmes of 1 or 2 years' duration were eligible to apply for this project. Sixty applications were received from higher education networks; 11 programmes involving 73 European universities were selected. Partners had to demonstrate course integration and ensure that full recognition is given to course units developed and delivered separately by the different partners in the Consortium. They were expected to define clearly the nature and form of the final diplomas delivered based upon the legislation in force in the partner countries (e.g. as one diploma endorsed by all universities involved, or as two or several separate degree certificates). Transparent procedures on quality assurance were in place from the beginning. It was particularly important that institutions should show that they have a clear language policy; if programmes are taught in a language other than that of the host institution, language training or other induction courses are expected. The project started during the academic year 2002-2003, and preliminary results were presented at the EUA Convention in May 2003.

At the Prague Summit in 2001, Ministers strongly encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to take full advantage of existing national legislation and European tools aimed at facilitating academic and professional recognition. They also called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree. For that reason, the development, implementation, monitoring and dissemination of examples of good practice in inter-university co-operation at Masters' level in Europe is so vital. This project understood it very well.

38. The EUA also launched another project that should, at least briefly, be reported here. The *Quality Culture Project* (2002 – 2003) is a Socrates-funded project with origins in the EUA's Action Plan 2001 – 2003, and in a Policy position paper on quality (EUA Council, Dubrovnik, September 2001). Both documents emphasized the importance of universities' capacity for developing a robust internal quality culture, which is integrally linked to institutional autonomy and public accountability. Fifty institutions – representing 29 countries – participated in this one-year project; they covered a spectrum of institutional size, types, traditions, structures and cultures. They were grouped into six small networks – co-ordinated by the universities of Bogazici, Leeds Metropolitan, Padova, Greifswald, Bergen and Vilnius – on the following themes: research management, teaching and learning, international partnerships, implementing Bologna, students support services and decision-making structures and communication flow. As in some other cases, the project is based on the EUA's and its members' conviction of the benefit of mutual learning "Bologna lessons" in the context of European diversity.

39. Generally, the concern for quality in European higher education has been very high on various agendas in the period between Prague and Berlin Summits, and indeed has widened its scope and initiatives. An interesting multi-country example of good practice is found in the *Joint Quality Initiative*. An informal network was set up for quality assurance and accreditation of Bachelor and Master study programmes in Europe. This initiative started soon after the Prague Summit, from a meeting of representatives from 11 countries (Maastricht, 24-25 September 2001) which introduced (or considered introducing) the accreditation of Bachelor and Master courses, aimed at transparency of higher education provision and internationalization of quality assurance and accreditation.

At its start, the *Joint Quality Initiative* formulated outlines of an action programme consisting of the following elements: a need for cross-border quality assessment, possibly followed by accreditation of new two-tier programmes; a need to share experience and discuss standards of new programmes; a need to initiate cross-national benchmarking; a need to consider franchising and quality assurance and

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[14] Tauch, Ch. and Rauhvargers, A., *Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe*. Genève: EUA, September 2002.

to compare various conceptualizations of accreditation. A series of working meetings and seminars – also in co-operation with other agencies and groups, e.g. the *Tuning* project – followed, giving very fruitful results that were noted and discussed far beyond the limits of the initial group. The most interesting contributions of the group are draft descriptors of Bachelor and Master programmes at different levels as well as considerations and remarks on what needs to be addressed next. Today, the wider academic public knows the so-called *Dublin descriptors* (a result of the Dublin workshop, 15 February 2002), but some still do not associate them with the valuable work of the *Joint Quality Initiative*. The Initiative has been instrumental in organizing the first official Bologna follow-up seminar of the period between Prague and Berlin, "Working on the European Dimension of Quality" (**11**).

40. In reporting on concerns for quality in European higher education, the particularly important position of the *European Network for Quality Assurance* (ENQA) should be highlighted. ENQA is a European network to disseminate information, experiences, good practices and new developments in quality assessment and quality assurance in higher education among interested parties: higher education institutions, public authorities and quality assurance agencies. The idea for the network originates from the *European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education*. It was established on the basis of the European Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998, while the *Bologna Declaration* gave it additional momentum one year later. The General Assembly meeting of March 2000 adopted the regulations and action plan; since then, the *Network* has figured prominently in discussions about quality issues in the Bologna context. In the period between Prague and Berlin, ENQA has been particularly active.

ENQA has been important to the Process in several ways. It has made remarkable contributions to the establishment of a common frame of reference, as coordinator of a pilot "*Trans-National European Evaluation Project*" (TEEP), supported by the EC Socrates programme. The project investigates operational implications of a European trans-national quality evaluation in three disciplines: Physics, History and Veterinary Science. With the purpose of increasing co-operation in European quality assurance, ENQA has also taken the initiative for EUA, ESIB and EURASHE to discuss – over a series of meetings – mutual points of interests and developments. ENQA has accepted, and continues to accept, quality assurance agencies from EU-associated countries as its member organizations. Last but not least, a joint working party has been set up of the recognition networks ENIC and NARIC and ENQA, to work on a joint agenda to improve the decision-making criteria for recognition of qualifications. In particular, the working group addresses key issues such as how the results of quality assurance can be taken into account in recognition of individual qualifications, the recognition of transnational qualifications, and joint degrees.

41. In the *Prague Communiqué*," Ministers called upon the universities and other higher education institutions, national agencies and the ENQA, in co-operation with responding bodies from countries which are not members of ENQA, to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice". A major focus in this process is the extent to which national external quality assurance procedures may meet the Bologna requirements for European compatibility and transparency. To this end, ENQA initiated *a survey*[15] *to identify shared protocols of quality assurance among European countries*. This survey is definitely one of most interesting and useful products of this follow-up period: it demonstrates clearly which evaluation models are used in various countries and analyzes basic similarities and differences. The results of the survey demonstrate that European quality assurance has expanded both in scope and type of evaluation methods, and that especially the concepts of accreditation and benchmarking are rapidly gaining new ground. The survey report points to four main issues: (1) it gives an overview on quality assurance agencies, (2) it analyzes types of evaluation in European quality assurance, (3) it continues with a description of the four-stage model (autonomy and independence in terms of procedures and methods; self-assessment; external

[15] The Danish Evaluation Institute. *Quality procedures in European Higher Education. An ENQA survey*. ENQA Occasional Papers 5. European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Helsinki, 2003 (41 pp.)

assessment; publication of a report), and (4) it concludes by considering the use of criteria and standards as a growing common element of most if not all evaluation procedures.

42. While evaluating recent activities and considering its possible future role, ENQA also prepared a special statement for the Berlin Summit. It reports that the 2002 General Assembly ended with a strong intention to increase its involvement and visibility in the development of the European quality assurance system. ENQA adds that, in the light of this encouragement by the General Assembly, it cannot ignore expectations from its members to comment actively on - as well as participate in - the formulation of the European dimension, while keeping in mind that ENQA is a network of independent opinions among its members.

Based on a letter to all its member organizations asking for their views regarding *the future role of ENQA in the European quality assurance* landscape, two different strategies were discussed in spring 2003. Under the *first strategy*, ENQA could continue with the role it was assigned in 2000: a mutually supportive voluntary membership body of independent European quality assurance agencies, heterogeneous in nature, providing professional services to its members. The *second strategy* would develop a more active policy-based role. ENQA stated that if it were to develop in that direction it would involve heading a movement towards a common European approach to quality assurance in higher education, with the appropriate authority and organizational structures, and would require ENQA to turn itself into the leading European policy development and advisory body in this area.

The feedback from members indicates that they expect ENQA to engage in active participation, both as a mutually supportive body that provides professional services *and* as a wider advisory body on methodological questions, with a mandate to issue recommendations. It is expected that this strategic discussion will continue at the next ENQA General Assembly in September 2003.

43. However, Spring 2003 brought another initiative in this field: *the European Consortium for Accreditation* (ECA). Representatives of thirteen accreditation organizations from eight countries (Austria, Belgium/Flanders, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands) as well as from the *Joint Quality Initiative* and the EC participated in the initial meeting held in The Hague on 12-13 June 2003. The meeting aimed at contributing to the development of a concept of accreditation that not only serves national needs but also the needs of the emerging EHEA. As the ultimate aim, participants stressed the achievement of mutual recognition of accreditation, either bilaterally or multilaterally. They see the main benefit of mutual recognition in the fact that a decision about accreditation taken in one country is recognized also by the other countries. Participants agreed that a consortium is an appropriate tool to strengthen collaboration among organizations primarily responsible for accreditation higher education. They were against becoming a "club" imposing accreditation as the sole instrument for quality assurance, and stressed that the consortium must have an open structure and should collaborate pro-actively with other organizations and initiatives, such as ENQA, the *Joint Quality Initiative* and NARIC. They also set up three working groups to study high priority issues (mutual recognition; European qualification framework; international transparency of accreditation decisions) and agreed to have the next meeting in Cordoba in November 2003, when each working group will present its preliminary findings as well as a working plan.

The discussion paper for the preparatory workshop in The Hague contains important considerations about the relationship between the ECA and existing networks like ENQA, the *Joint Quality Initiative* or the *D-A-CH-Network* (a network among the German-speaking countries). The paper puts an interesting question: why was this initiative not taken by ENQA, and what is the relationship between ECA and ENQA? The answer given is that "The ground for the initiative to establish the ECA as a separate consortium is simple: ENQA is not yet the place to discuss the implementation and operationalization of accreditation. The discussion is still too much between countries *in favour* of accreditation and countries *against* accreditation. This discussion serves a goal in itself, but it does not help the countries that have already made the choice *for* accreditation. As a matter of course it is

important to keep in touch with ENQA."[16] The fact that a number of ECA members are also members of ENQA should prevent the ECA from acting "in a closed world", and ensure continuity of work. ECA pays special attention to the relationship with Central and Eastern European countries. It stated that although the consortium started with accrediting bodies in Western Europe, it is to be considered an open consortium: any accrediting body that endorses the aims of the consortium can apply for membership.

44. Concerns for *quality* are closely connected to *assessment and recognition issues*; these issues are even more important when the special dimensions of lifelong learning are considered. ICE-PLAR (*International Credential Evaluators and Prior Learning Assessors*) is a project on prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR). It is carried out by the ENIC/NARICs of the Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden and led by the Dutch ENIC/NARIC, which has sought to develop a methodology for the recognition of non-formal or informal learning or – in broader terms – any kind of competence at higher education level that cannot be documented by traditional means. Through different forms of assessment, including interviews, simulations and tests as well as the candidate's portfolio, the PLAR methodology seeks to establish the candidate's actual competences, whether for the purpose of access to higher education (at whatever level appropriate) or for employment. Thus, this pilot project provides a wide range of experiences that could be very helpful in searching for systemic procedures and tools in lifelong learning in the Bologna process.

45. Recognition issues and the Bologna Process were the main focus of the 10th Joint Meeting of the ENIC and NARIC Networks held in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, 18-20 May 2003. The meeting finalized an important document which will influence European higher education in the near future: the *Draft Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees* (see below, **70**). It also adopted the *Statement by the ENIC and NARIC Networks on the EHEA* (*Vaduz Statement*), which ought to be mentioned here. The Networks emphasize their positive contribution to the Bologna process since their annual meeting in Vilnius in June 1999. Their work to improve and facilitate recognition of qualifications in Europe relies on, and seeks to implement, the *Lisbon Recognition Convention*, as well as – for professional qualifications – the *EU Directives on professional recognition*. In Vaduz, they confirmed their intention to continue to contribute to the Process and to support its ultimate goal to facilitate the mobility of students, staff and higher education graduates within as large a part of Europe as possible.

The ENIC and NARIC Networks recognize that the EHEA must be built on both national and joint policies in key areas agreed within a European framework, and that without commitment to and implementation of these policies at national level, the EHEA will not become an effective reality. They consider the Bologna process to be the most important reform of higher education in Europe, and see their contribution to it as helping to build bridges between education systems and qualifications and as fora for the further development of recognition policies in Europe and beyond. They stress again that recognition of qualifications is of key importance to the realization of Bologna process goals, and also to its "external dimension". The outcomes of transparent quality assurance procedures are also of key importance to the recognition of qualifications, and therefore the Networks declare their intention to continue their co-operation with the ENQA.

Specifically, the ENIC and NARIC Networks see their further contribution to the EHEA in facilitating recognition of qualifications issued within the two-tier degree structure, in developing co-operation between the recognition and quality assurance networks, in improving information about the recognition of foreign qualifications, and in improving recognition of joint degrees. They will also seek to develop recognition procedures that focus on the recognition of learning *outcomes* rather than on the formal paths that have led to these outcomes, especially because recognition based on learning outcomes also facilitates lifelong learning. The Networks will contribute to the development of

[16] *Towards a European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)*. Discussion paper for preparatory workshop in The Hague on 12-13 June 2003.

transparent qualifications frameworks at national level as well as in the context of the EHEA, and improve recognition of qualifications from other parts of the world.

46. Among the numerous networks that have recently put "Bologna" on their agendas, the *European Access Network* (EAN) deserves mention for a particular reason. Both the *Bologna Declaration* and the *Prague Communiqué* stressed the importance of broad and equal access to higher education as well as removing obstacles. EAN's mission is precisely in this field: to encourage wider access to higher education for those who are currently under-represented, whether for reasons of gender, ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, family background, vocational training, geographic location, or earlier educational disadvantage. To mark the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003 and to contribute to the Bologna process, the 12th Annual Conference of the EAN (held in Prague from 29 June to 2 July 2003) raises key questions about equity and future higher education development, under the heading "*Parity of Access Across Europe?*"

The conference provided a unique opportunity for delegates to play an effective role in shaping the access agenda in an enlarged Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The EAN strongly believes that an educated society and an informed citizenry are vital in fighting xenophobia, racism and religious intolerance. However, the ultimate goal of using education to democratize society cannot be achieved until equality of access to education and training is available to all groups in society. As many European countries are beginning to implement the key areas of the Bologna process, the EAN is concerned that access and equity, fundamental in the prevention of social exclusion, must be highlighted, otherwise the essence of social inclusion in a knowledge-based society will be lost. The momentum created by the Bologna process is not a magic wand; in today's circumstances, it offers an alternative path between new opportunities and possible new barriers for disadvantaged and under-represented groups. The EAN asked an important question which should be more strongly heard in the future of the Process: *how inclusive is the European Higher Education Area?* Will it merely preserve the advantages and enlarge the benefits already enjoyed by the same groups that are already over-represented in higher education?

47. This sub-chapter aims to give a brief overview of enhanced networking in European higher education and of various pilot and developmental projects. Despite its relative length in comparison to other chapters, it was possible to draw attention only to the most important events and to give a few examples. Yet before we go on to the next issue, one more feature of increasing networking must be mentioned: – *regional co-operation*. It is obvious that in between the national and pan-European levels there are areas with more or less traditional forms of co-operation. The Bologna process gives a new momentum to these areas. On the other hand, it seems that the EHEA will need a more structured "continental" landscape, and in this regard regional initiatives could be very useful. Today, there are many formal and informal initiatives of this type all around Europe; some of them – e.g., the Adriatic-Ionian initiative, Nordic Space for Higher Education or South East European Educational Co-operation Network – also have Bologna agendas as part of their profile. These networks strengthen the Bologna process from the inside, but they are – due to geographical, cultural, linguistic, etc. reasons – also important for further accessions as well as for the external dimension of the Process.

2.2 Further accessions and the external dimension of the Bologna process

48. BFUG and BPG paid considerable attention to issues of further accessions to the Bologna process and its "external dimension". Since the Prague Summit, a constant and growing interest for joining and/or for various modes of participating has been observed. Signatories of the *Bologna Declaration* didn't close themselves off from other European countries; they also expressly underlined the need to make the EHEA more attractive to the rest of the world. Both "dimensions" – further accession as well as global attractiveness – became even more important during the 2001-2003 follow-up period.

Soon after the Prague Summit, BFUG and BPG received expressions of interest, not only from new potential signatory countries but also from other parts of the world. Much interest came from countries of South Eastern Europe. At the CD-HCR round table in October 2002 (see **21**), Russia also declared its informal interest in joining the Bologna Process and described some of the concrete steps taken towards educational reform in Russia. Later, similar intentions were received from Ukraine and from two countries of other geographical parts of Europe – Andorra and the Holy See. These communications crystallized at the beginning of 2003 into complete applications received from Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as well as in further preparatory work and exchange of information with other countries.

Meanwhile, the increasing relevance and attractiveness of the Bologna process in the global higher education arena also manifested itself in the 2001-2003 period. Partly, these issues have been linked to the UNESCO agenda and its various international fora; partly there have also been purely "regionally grounded" interests, for example from some Latin American or Caribbean countries where the Bologna process is being considered as a possible model of good practice for the further development of higher education. In discussions, it was pointed out that the Process has its own identity; but it is clear that ways need to be found to deal with the "external dimension" of the Process in future. It was agreed that UNESCO Headquarters might offer a great service, and in fact it has already expressed its interest in participating more actively in the Bologna process.

BFUG and BPG have maintained continual communication with all interested partners and discussed these issues at their meetings. They fall mostly into two clusters. The first cluster includes requests from newly applicant countries (or organizations wishing to become "observers") and raises the question of eligibility. The second cluster includes interest expressed by other geographical areas, and raises the question of the emerging EHEA and its external relations. These questions were discussed thoroughly and systematically.

2.2.1 Further accessions

49. Already at the BFUG meeting in Santander in May 2002 a question of principle was raised – how to respond if a new higher education law is being prepared in an applicant country that not only fails to be in compliance with the principles of the *Bologna Declaration* but actually runs counter to the reform process. This led to a discussion about criteria for eligibility and possible selection of new members of the Bologna process. There was a consensus that the Process can provide important guidance to non-signatory states, and that those who are interested should be invited to attend follow-up seminars while the Ministers will decide on the received applications at their forthcoming Summit in Berlin. A discussion focused on the need to revise the eligibility criteria laid down in the *Prague Communiqué*, and to introduce into the *Berlin Communiqué* also a specific commitment of the signatory states to realize the Bologna objectives, notwithstanding national differences and particularities.

An introductory discussion led to a decision that an *ad hoc* working party should be formed to analyse the issue and prepare further debate. While the origin of this debate is to be found in (a) *possible applications for further accessions*, it quickly became clear that this was only one of the issues in the further development of the Bologna process as a framework for the reform of higher education in Europe, and that the question of new accessions cannot be divorced from (b) *considerations of the implementation of the Bologna process by its current members.*

A working group drafted a paper on "*Further Accessions to the Bologna process – Considerations and Suggestions for further Action*" which was discussed both in BFUG and BPG in late 2002 and early 2003. The working group stated that at both the Bologna and Prague meetings, the Ministers recognized the potential for further expansion of the Bologna process but at the same time stated that this should be based on a commitment to the goals of the Process as stated in the *Bologna Declaration* and, implicitly, also in policy documents adopted by subsequent Ministerial meetings. However,

further developments and specific issues articulated two further questions: *what form and content should applications have*, and according to *what criteria* should they be assessed? Here, the working party emphasized *the two aspects of the Process*: on one side and in conjunction to the "Bologna" goals, there are examples of good practice that are seen as beneficial by the participating countries and that may be of interest to other countries; and on the other side, there is the commitment to set up (by 2010) a formal structure of the EHEA with firm obligations and policy commitments.

50. The working group stated that 2010 has been stipulated as the end goal of the Bologna Process through the setting up of the EHEA, but many questions remain to be answered – and probably also to be asked – about how this will happen and what the implications will be. The group then asked: "Will the [dynamic] *process* inevitably be transformed into a [static] *state of affairs*?"[17] Certainly this is an important question that couldn't be raised in Bologna in 1999, but only at an advanced stage of the Process. At least in part, this question will determine follow-up discussions over the next two years or even longer. We haven't answered it yet, despite serious attempts in previous discussions.

At the November 2002 Copenhagen BFUG meeting, a wish was expressed to develop a more formalized structure with milestones and stock-taking. The geographical question was also addressed, and the need for a more precise criterion for access to the Bologna process. The issue of precise goals and contents of the EHEA should be addressed soon, together with a discussion on the organizational structure of the process; a "mid-way" report was also suggested. In addition, the importance that the EHEA goal should be reached by 2010 was stressed. The meeting also agreed that the same requirements should apply to applicants as to present members, and that keeping openness and a dynamic balance - with a minimum of formality and structure – are of vital importance to the Process and its breadth.

51. The working party submitted the improved paper – with a slightly changed title[18] – at the next BFUG meeting in Athens in February 2003. Now, it reflects on *three main aspects* of the Bologna process: (a) as a more or less formal structure seeking to set up the EHEA with a number of common characteristics, within which students and staff will be able to move with relative ease; (b) as a process towards a target in which its specific objectives are differentiated and deepened; and finally (c) as an "example of good practice" indicating higher education policies and practices that are seen as beneficial by the participating countries and that may be of interest to other countries or systems of higher education. The second aspect, *the process* – put between two "extremes": *formal structure* and *voluntary examples* – is a result of discussions in the groups and a thorough analysis of coping with the recent and current reality of the Process.

The concept of process is important for the signatory countries as well as for accession of new members. In Bologna – as well as in Prague – no questions were asked as to the real intentions of the signatories, nor were countries asked to submit plans showing how they intended to reach the Bologna goals. However, *the closer we get to 2010, the more important it will be to assess whether policies have been implemented or are likely to be put in place in time for the EHEA to be established.* It should be kept in mind that new partner countries will be held to the same deadlines as the original 29, even if they may have to implement their higher education reform in less time. The working party noted that this has at least been the assumption so far, as there has been no discussion of transition measures or deadlines –for example, when new countries accede to the European Union.

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[17] Bologna Follow Up Group. *Further Accessions to the Bologna Process – Considerations and Suggestions for Further Action.* Report by an *ad hoc* working party. Bonn/Strasbourg/Bruxelles, October 10, 2002, p. 4.

[18] Bologna Follow-Up Group. *Further Development of the Bologna Process: Milestones, Stocktaking and Further Accessions. Considerations and Suggestions for Further Action.* Report by an *ad hoc* working party. Bonn/Strasbourg, January 15, 2003.

52. At the June 2003 BFUG meeting in Athens it was clear that applications from four countries of South Eastern Europe were received on time, that they fulfil the criteria, and that they can be submitted to the Ministerial Summit in September. The BFUG meeting was also informed about a recent letter from the Russian Minister Mr. Filippov to the Greek Minister Mr. Eftimiu, informing him about progressive reforms of the Russian higher education and asking for participation in forthcoming meetings with a view to join the Bologna process. As already announced at the St. Petersburg seminar in December 2002 (see **56**), another important national conference on these issues will take place in Russia in autumn 2003.

On the basis of previous correspondence, Ukrainian Minister Mr. Kremen notified the same BFUG meeting that the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine is ready to organize an international conference to discuss the position and respective development of national higher education and to study experience of European countries and their realization of the *Bologna Declaration*. Participants in the June 2003 BFUG meeting also took note of correspondence with Andorra and the Holy See; no complete applications had been received at that time. The existing criteria for membership as defined in the *Prague Communiqué* (eligibility for the EU programmes Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci or Tempus/Cards) also proved inadequate in some of these cases, and BFUG decided to propose that they should be reconsidered at the Berlin Summit.

Events in some of the countries mentioned above deserve more attention here, in particular preparatory seminars held in the 2001-2003 period (some of them already mentioned, see **22**) in countries of South Eastern Europe and Russian Federation.

2.2.2 The Bologna Process and South Eastern Europe

53. Countries of *South Eastern Europe* (SEE) and their higher education systems went through hard times in the 1990s, and they now seek to join international co-operation and integration to foster national economic, social and cultural recovery. Universities can play an important role in these processes, offering knowledge and qualifications as well as democratic values. An interesting regional event with relevance for the Bologna process took place in August 2002, supported by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Technology. University Rectors of all SEE countries met at the Inter-University Centre (IUC) in Dubrovnik for the first time after a decade of conflicts in the region, and discussed international processes in higher education from a regional point of view. In their final Statement they appealed "to the European institutions immediately to admit the regional universities within the Erasmus and Socrates programs, i.e., to facilitate the mobility and exchange of students and faculty from the region". They decided to organize two working groups "on the following important issues: (a) curriculum reform, (b) mutual recognition of periods of study and diplomas within and outside the region."[19] The second SEE Regional Rectors' Conference in August 2003 focuses on curricular reform, but also on various aspects of excellence building and on specific projects of regional academic co-operation.

54. The main Bologna follow-up event in the SEE region was a conference on "The External Dimension of the Bologna Process: South-East European Higher Education and the European Higher Education Area in a Global World" organized jointly by UNESCO-CEPES and EUA and held in Bucharest on 6-8 March, 2003. It relied on the Project "Regional University Network of Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe", supported by the European Commission in the framework of the CARDS Programme. The conference explored four main topics: (1) challenges and opportunities facing higher education systems and institutions participating in the project (from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro

[19] Statement from the Dubrovnik Meeting of University Rectors of Southeast European Countries. Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, 23 August 2002.
See http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_bologna.htm

and Serbia) in the context of the Bologna process; (2) challenges to academic values and to the organization of academic work at a time of increasing globalization; (3) higher education as a public responsibility and a public good, and its significance for higher education in the region; (4) quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications as regulatory mechanisms in the EHEA.

This conference was rich in content. The organizers provided analytical materials on the reforming processes at nine selected SEE universities[20], and the preliminary results of the analysis of *Trends III* data for the SEE region were presented for the first time followed by other presentations and interesting discussions among participants from a total of 18 European countries. Experience in the above-mentioned project has demonstrated that those responsible for higher education in SEE countries have already used the provisions of the *Bologna Declaration* and the *Prague Communiqué* as a reference framework for their own reform initiatives. Today, there is clear evidence of a strong commitment to achieving the Bologna process objectives in the region. Participants recommended that the Ministers meeting in Berlin take this into consideration and welcome new applicants from the region as full members in the Bologna process. Participants also welcomed the opportunity of promoting debate and exchange of experience between representatives of the BFUG and of the various applicant countries from the region.

55. Participants analyzed recent developments in depth, and made recommendations. *University autonomy* is now legally protected in all the countries concerned and the practical implementation of this essential element is also improving. The values of academic freedom are highly regarded and embedded in everyday academic work. However, in terms of *governance* there are still many issues to be addressed. The current organization of universities as mostly weak federations of legally autonomous faculties hinders the effective implementation of the objectives of the Bologna process. Although *students* have a formal role in institutional governance bodies, they are, in practice, in many cases not yet actively involved. *Quality assurance* has become a key challenge for national authorities and institutions across the region. Given the small size of the respective higher education systems, the introduction of more systematic and effective institutional quality assurance mechanisms, including a wider European dimension, becomes ever more important. Therefore, institutions have been encouraged to strengthen their European networking activities in this field, and fledgling national agencies should work together with the ENQA; countries that have not yet established an ENIC are expected do so as soon as possible.

Universities in the region are well aware that their main priority should be curricular reform. Structures remain traditional, curricula have not been restructured and the duration of studies at Bachelor level is longer than intended in the Bologna process while the Master level tends to be simply an add-on to the previous one. Attention was drawn to the importance of diversification, the need to develop alternative forms of provision, and the need to promote lifelong learning. However, pilot projects are on the way and considerable efforts have been made in all countries to introduce ECTS. Compared to the past, academic mobility has increased dramatically, despite obstacles encountered both by staff and students (visa requirements, financial resources). On the negative side, many of the best students and graduates do not return after their study abroad, thus contributing to brain drain from the region. There are still difficulties with the recognition of qualifications and periods of study, both internally between the countries in the region, and in relation to other countries.

Participants dealt also with the issue of *higher education as a public responsibility and a public good*, from a specific regional point of view. They believed there is now a need to focus attention on the responsibility of public authorities for higher education. They saw the dilemma facing the countries of the region as that of coping with the consequences of accepting public responsibility for higher

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[20] Case studies from universities of Zagreb and Split (Croatia), Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Montenegro (Montenegro), Novi Sad and Niš (Serbia), Prishtina (Kosovo), Tirana (Albania) and Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (FYR of Macedonia).
See http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_bologna.htm

education - the challenges of supporting a system ensuring equity and equal access for all according to merit, and high quality of provision - at a time of strictly limited state budgets, multiple and growing funding demands, and recent large increases in higher education participation rates across the region. There is a need for further investigation of various possible models of funding higher education systems, taking into consideration the growing competitiveness in the emerging EHEA where sustainable levels of excellence are a prerequisite.

2.2.3 The Bologna Process and the Russian Federation

56. At the CD-ESR round table in October 2002 (see **21**), Russia declared its interest in joining the Bologna process and described some of the concrete steps taken towards educational reform in Russia. A related event, important for the external dimension of the Bologna process, was held in December 2002 in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation: the international seminar *"Integration of the Russian higher school into the European zone of higher education – perspectives and problems"*. Representatives of legislative and executive authorities of the Russian Federation, headed by the Minister of Education of the Russian Federation Mr. Filippov, the Chair of the Education Committee of the Duma Mr. Alexander Shishlov, rectors and pro-rectors of Russian institutions of higher education and the representatives of public organizations took part in the seminar. Representatives of the BPG and some experts from international organizations joined the seminar and presented key topics of the Bologna process.

The seminar established that *the preconditions for the introduction of higher professional education system into the Bologna process had been met in the Russian Federation*. In the discussion, it was stressed that the current legislation has foreseen the possibility of realizing a multi-stage structure of higher education, which is in fact already functioning in many institutions. The results of pilot projects in some institutions based on credit points were presented. After a lively plenary discussion the participants agreed on a number of recommendations to the Russian Ministry of Education. They stressed the need to ensure citizens and foreign students access to information about the Russian educational system, about the professional qualification and degree structures, and about the modernization process of higher professional education in Russia, but also the necessity of Russian integration into European and world educational systems.

It is worth setting out the following key ideas from a long list of recommendations: (1) close co-operation inside the Russian administration should be established, with a view to improving the recognition of the Bachelor degree in enterprises, institutions and organizations; (2) a methodology of modular construction of study programmes should be developed; (3) there is a need to establish a system of graduation documents consistent with the European "Diploma Supplement" and the instructions for completing the diploma forms and their supplements on the basis of credit points; (4) the possibility of introducing a decentralized model for recognition of foreign educational documents should be examined; (5) most attention should be given to preparation of a quality assurance system consistent with international procedures of quality assessment; (6) the initiative of the Russian institutions of higher education to strengthen academic mobility should be supported.

Last but not least, participants stressed that decision-making about incorporation of the Russian Federation into the Bologna process should be accelerated. A joint working group was set up consisting of experts from St. Petersburg State University, Moscow State University and the Russian Ministry of Education, along with representatives of leading institutions of higher education in the Russian Federation and public organizations. The working group will examine all aspects of Bologna process and the compatibility of its requirements with the actual state of Russian education.

2.2.4 UNESCO and global processes in higher education

57. From the very beginning, it has been clear that the idea of the EHEA is closely related not only to European but also to global processes in higher education. Therefore, it couldn't be mere coincidence that between *Sorbonne* and the *Bologna Declaration* an important global meeting took place: UNESCO's *World Conference on Higher Education*, organized in Paris in October 1998. It has had an important follow-up, which is today highly relevant to the external dimension of the Bologna Process. Besides the particular issues – which are mostly linked to South Eastern and Eastern Europe, where UNESCO-CEPES has had an important role in the Bologna process – there are today also literally global higher education issues that should be addressed. There is a consensus that UNESCO offers the best forum for such a discussion.

In the footsteps of the *World Conference* of 1998, and in the new context – to which the Bologna Process has also contributed – UNESCO organized on 17-18 October 2002 in Paris the *First Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education*. It was launched as part of UNESCO's mission to respond to the challenges and dilemmas facing higher education as a result of globalization, with a special focus on sharing responsibilities between the North and the South. It aims to provide a platform for dialogue between a wide range of higher education providers and stakeholders and to link existing frameworks dealing with international issues of quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications.

The *Global Forum* recalled UNESCO's support for the principles of access to quality higher education for all on the basis of merit as a human right, and of education remaining a 'public good'. The debate contributed to the understanding of this important, hence sometimes fuzzy, notion. The participants agreed that bridges should be built between education and trade in services; UNESCO, the WTO and the OECD could act as complementary organizations providing a joint forum for discussing both the cultural and commercial aspects of trade in higher education. After a debate the *Global Forum* proposed an Action Plan for UNESCO covering a range of activities. Reinforcement, revision and updating of the existing regional conventions on the recognition of qualifications seem to be high on the agenda to respond to new needs and to represent international standards in the GATS framework. Research on and articulation of what is meant by 'public good' – especially in view of the rapid growth in private national and transborder higher education provision in certain regions and member states – was perceived as another priority area. The *Forum* also stressed the need for capacity building at the regional and national levels for quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms, within a strengthened international framework.

58. The *Second Global Forum on Globalisation and Higher Education: Implications for North - South Dialogue* was held in Oslo, 26-27 May 2003, co-hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and UNESCO. It was a follow up to the first *Forum*, and focused on challenges individual institutions and national higher education systems are facing in a global environment, in response to the pressures of an emerging knowledge society and economic growth. This conference brought together some 200 participants, representing a wide range of stakeholders in higher education, including some Ministers and heads of institutions, from Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO, Mr. Daniel, summed up the discussions as "a dialogue between different views of the world, notably between a stance that emphasizes the role of the nation state or the collectivity and a position that stresses the freedom of an of the individual".[21] Indeed, the organizer did succeed in gathering the most relevant speakers and representatives, and providing opportunities for real dialogue. The most attractive part was a discussion on the first day among the World Bank with its role in the development of higher education, the World Trade Organization that is implementing GATS, and UNESCO with its mandate to ensure free exchange of

[21] Daniel, J., *A Way Forward: Closing Remarks*. The Second Global Forum on Globalisation and Higher Education: Implications for North - South Dialogue. Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and UNESCO. Oslo, 26-27 May 2003 (4 pp.). http://www.ldv.no/unesco

ideas and knowledge. However, inputs from governmental representatives, representatives from Council of Europe, world student organizations (All Africa Students Union, Asian Students Association, ESIB), universities all around the world, and last but not least, from employers and industry, made this dialogue even more constructive and fruitful.

Several key themes were discussed at the *Forum*, but the role of UNESCO's Regional Conventions and new challenges of globalization seem to be most notable and appropriate. Not only in Oslo, but also in recent debates in general, the essence of this issue has been recognized as bridging quality assurance and recognition frameworks. The *Forum* confirmed the need for a legal framework to facilitate the recognition of qualifications and provide transparent arrangements for quality assurance; there was also a consensus that such a framework should be established through the co-operation of public authorities and the higher education community. It also recommended that all UNESCO Regional Conventions should be revised, using the *Lisbon Recognition Convention* as the starting point. This work is likely to start with a feasibility study on what needs to be added to these Conventions to make them into useful instruments that are complementary to GATS, first of all by bringing together the issues of qualification frameworks, quality standards and benchmarks, quality assurance and accreditation, and the recognition of qualifications. Participants saw such a general study as a necessary step before launching the process of revision of the Regional Conventions. Revision would be necessary in any case – even without the GATS – if these Conventions are to remain useful guides in the rapidly changing world of higher education. As it did a decade ago, when the *Lisbon Recognition Convention* was drafted, the Council of Europe has again offered to contribute to such a study.

59. Finally, there was a third UNESCO conference with specific relevance to the Bologna process, in particular to its external dimension: the *World Conference on Higher Education + 5* (WCHE+5), held in Paris, 23-25 June 2003 and attended by more than 400 experts and authorities from some 120 countries. This was a real follow-up of the Conference of 1998 which contributed a great deal to a new vision of higher education. In order to turn this vision of higher education into reality, special emphasis has been placed on quality, the potential and implications of the use of technologies, management and financing, sharing knowledge and know how, etc. In this latter respect, the need to stem the brain drain and to establish credible, long-term partnerships – based on common interest, mutual respect and solidarity – has been emphasized in various discussions over the last few years. Five years after the initial 1998 *Conference*, it appeared both useful and necessary to draw up a balance sheet. The main purpose of this assessment was to identify changes that have taken place in higher education since 1998 and their consequences, to identify examples of good practice, and to try to define orientations for future action.

In the preparatory activities for the WCHE+5 conference, a questionnaire was sent to member states to collect data on higher education over the past five years, aimed at identifying changes that have occurred. UNESCO offices, centres and institutes responsible for follow-up at regional level had also been asked to prepare regional reports on the development of higher education since 1998. The WCHE+5 conference presented and discussed the results of this world-wide survey, examining how systems are changing country by country.[22]

2.2.5 The external dimension: attractiveness, openness and co-operation

60. It is obvious that the "external dimension" has been one of the priority issues on the BFUG and BPG agendas. Already at the meeting in Santander in May 2002, BFUG agreed that a specific point for debate of the external aspects of the Bologna process should be prepared for a systemic discussion at the next meetings. For that purpose, another *ad hoc* working party was formed which prepared

[22] See *Bibliography* for details.

several drafts of the report.[23] The conclusions were phrased so that they could be easily used in the process of drafting the *Berlin Communiqué*. The discussion started with familiar statements from the *Bologna Declaration* and *Prague Communiqué*, but also took into account the objectives of the Lisbon 2000 European Council (**04, 17**) and continued under the headings *attractiveness*, *openness* and *co-operation*.

61. The working group found that *attractiveness* of European higher education depends on many factors of which the most important are quality, transparency, diversity and visibility. The commitment to quality as a prime responsibility of the institutions and the quality assurance systems set up in the signatory countries should be a guarantee for students from abroad who want to study at the frontline in their subject. Among European universities, it should be possible to find in every subject area at least a dozen institutions of world class, based on linking research and teaching. The transparency of European higher educations degrees is the second factor, featuring prominently on the "Bologna" agenda. Diversity in scientific approaches as well as in culture and language is also a benefit of European higher education, and should be promoted as such; for foreign students this could be experienced through joint programmes. Excellent programmes of European higher education have to be known worldwide in order to be attractive; therefore, more transparent information is needed.

62. The group defined *openness* as openness to students from all over the world. However, existing legal provisions hinder the best students from third countries to join European higher education, mainly due to their financial situation. In order to meet this challenge the already existing systems of scholarship programmes should be improved, and general scholarship programmes for citizens from third countries to individual universities should be established at the national as well as the EU level. Many countries have already established programmes for foreign students. There is a tendency to move from the bilateral system to a more open multilateral approach; Norway and the Netherlands, among others, have already done this. Some other countries are considering rearrangements at the moment. However, some European study programmes may be organized as joint programmes offered in partnership by universities in different European countries; this trend is expected to increase in the near future. The establishment of a scholarship programme (*Erasmus Mundus*) will be an important step, but because of its size it will only benefit a limited number of students. Visas and stay permit regulations should also be reconsidered.

63. With regard to *co-operation with third countries*, the group pointed out that signatories already have a huge task on their hands in accomplishing the "Bologna objectives", and that at this stage associating with non-European countries would add too many complications. Instead, the Bologna-countries should co-operate with regions and countries in other parts of the world by promoting the idea and practice of regional co-operation, and by practical advice and dissemination of experiences. The main idea of regional co-operation in higher education "à la Bologna" should be promoted in other parts of the world. However, such co-operation can only be established under certain conditions, e.g. a governmental "climate" that allows peaceful co-operation in the region, free associations of students and academics, autonomous institutions (in line with the *Magna Carta Universitatum* of 1988), acceptance of a common language or a common ability to work in several languages, commitment of governments and institutions to reform, etc. Existing co-operative frameworks, contacts with UNESCO regions and exchange of information via existing channels can be very helpful in developing this new type of co-operation. Regional conferences about the Bologna process and support to leading countries as promoters in the particular region could enhance it even more.

The group identified the following world regions as potential targets: Middle Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries, SNG/CIS countries, Caribbean and Latin America as well as South-East Asia. From a practical standpoint, the group drew attention to the long-standing traditions of co-operation with non-European countries developed by several European countries. This could be an

[23] Bologna Follow-Up Group. *Attractiveness. Openness and Cooperation.* Report by the Danish delegation (4. draft). Athens, 20 June 2003 (8 pp.).

important resource for future European co-operation in general with overseas regions. On the other hand, the EU is entitled by art. 181 of the Treaty to enter into agreements with third countries or groups of such countries; existing agreements often contain provisions for co-operation in higher education, and in this way they support the external dimension of the Bologna process. Similarly, the Council of Europe can make an important contribution; it links numerous European countries (European Cultural Convention), and plays an important role in recognition of qualifications as well as in other aspects of higher education policy. Last but not least, the potential of European organizations at the non-governmental level should not be overlooked.

2.3 The main goals of the *Bologna Declaration* and *Prague Communiqué* in the light of 2003

64. Coming to the concluding part of this review, we will slightly change the focus and try to synthesize the *content* of Bologna activities during 2001–2003. The question is how the particular goals of both the *Bologna Declaration* and the *Prague Communiqué* are reflected in discussions, findings and documents of the follow-up period (presented above). To do this, we might take a walk along the nine Bologna action lines. However, it is very difficult – and at some points even dangerous – to observe them in isolation, one by one: Bologna action lines should be taken as an integral agenda. They are closely interlinked, and drawing demarcation lines between them – e.g. between a "system of easily readable and comparable degrees" on the one hand and "the adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles" on the other – would be artificial and unjustified.

Official follow-up seminars were not organized strictly along particular (nine) action lines but along (six) clusters of issues. Today, participants would agree that this was the right approach: issues were mostly discussed in all their complexity and mutual relevance. Conclusions and recommendations from official follow up seminars are important but they are not the only reference points for this attempt at synthesis; surveys and studies developed in parallel to the seminars, other discussions, various projects and events are also taken into account. Therefore, in this chapter some specific action lines are reviewed in two roughly-drawn clusters (*structural* and *social* dimensions), and the impact of various Bologna events of the period 2001-2003 is considered, to the extent that the limited frame of this chapter allows. In addition, some newly identified problems, issues and scenarios for the future are mentioned.

2.3.1 Structural dimensions

65. Four seminars had a special focus on various issues related to *a system of easily readable and comparable degrees essentially based on two main cycles*: Stockholm and Mantova, Helsinki and Copenhagen. But other seminars – e.g. Amsterdam launching a discussion on "generic descriptors", or Zürich discussing credit systems, or Prague working on the lifelong learning context – contributed importantly to these issues as well. These contributions extend to other events also, in particular to the EUA Graz Convention. The *Trends III Report* gives an excellent insight into these issues, as does another special survey (see **37**, note 13) conducted by EUA. Finally, in listing relevant inputs on these issues we should not forget various pilot projects and national reports.

According to *Trends III*, important progress has been made regarding the introduction of study structures based on an undergraduate and a graduate tier. First of all, legal possibilities have been considerably improved and many governments have fixed deadlines for the transition to the new degree system. More than one-half of higher education institutions report today that they are introducing the two-tier structure, and more than one-third of them are planning it. The survey on Master Degrees confirms a strong trend towards "second level" degrees, too. Interesting evidence has been gathered also from the *Tuning* project and, in particular, from the clear affirmation of its findings among higher educational communities across Europe: for example, showing that *convergence that*

fully respects diversity can be achieved, starting from analysis of the role of competences and learning outcomes.

66. In the period between Prague and Berlin increased attention has been given to the *detailed structure of the two main cycles*. The terms of Bachelor and Master have been widely used to characterize both cycles; however, concerns have been expressed that these terms – in particular with reference to the EHEA – could provoke confusion both in countries that have traditionally used them and in those that haven't. Participants in the seminars worked hard to agree on a definition of the internal composition of individual levels. Already before the Prague Summit, at the Finnish "Seminar on Bachelor-level Degrees", an agreement was reached that a "*Bachelor-level degree is a higher education qualification the extent of which is 180 to 240 credits (ECTS)*"[24]. This agreement was confirmed again in the period that concludes with the Berlin Summit; discussions went more in depth, stressing that concerns for *learning outcomes* and qualification are even more important than *length of study*. This approach led to some very detailed questions on qualification frameworks that could be extremely important on the road towards EHEA. However, in the pre-Berlin period much more attention than pre-Prague has been given to the composition of the "second level" (Master) degrees.

As was shown in the survey mentioned above, there is a growing trend towards Master level degrees that require the equivalent of 300 ECTS credits, although examples of slightly longer and slightly shorter courses can be found. The majority of countries and institutions seem to be inclined towards *90-120 ECTS Master programmes*. Medicine and related disciplines require a different scheme in most – but not all – countries, and expectations for an "integrated" Master degree have been noted also, in particular in environments with traditionally long one-cycle programmes. Some comments have been made at seminars and on other occasions that "particularities" should not be used as a pretext for "diversity", which should be respected. Similar comments have been expressed with regard to a tendency to see first-cycle degrees only as a stepping-stone or orientation platform for the second level degree and not as an end in itself, "relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification". On the other hand, differentiation among "academic" and "professional" second-cycle degrees – which have been developed in some countries – doesn't seem to create problems, at least not in principle. It seems much more important to change approaches to *learning*, e.g. learning should not be expressed in traditional terms of "seat-time" but in terms of study credits gained. Considerable attention has been given to the question of access: in principle, entrance to second-cycle degree programmes should be made possible without additional requirements, but actual admission should remain the responsibility of the institutions offering second-cycle degrees.

Against the background of previous discussions, the "second" Finnish seminar (**14**) focused entirely on "Master-level Degrees". The Conclusions and Recommendations of this seminar[25] place strong emphasis on the frame of reference for Master degrees in Europe. Participants established that various initiatives are underway that aim at defining learning outcomes, skills and competences both at the Bachelor and Master level, and stated that this will allow capitalizing on the richness of European higher education traditions and creating European profiles in various disciplines. Since the promotion of mobility in Europe requires increased transparency and comparability, some common criteria for the structural definition of Master degrees - in their various national names - are necessary. Therefore, participants of the Helsinki seminar aimed for a frame of reference (*"common denominators for a Master degree in the EHEA"*) that should be flexible enough to allow national and institutional variations, but also clear enough to serve as a definition.

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[24] *Conclusions and Recommendations of the Seminar to the Prague Higher Education Summit*. The Bologna Process. Seminar on Bachelor-level Degrees. Helsinki, 16-17 February 2001.

[25] Note that in this document the term Master degree is used to describe all second-cycle higher education degrees at Master level irrespective of their different national titles.

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According to these recommendations, a Master degree should be seen as a second-cycle higher education qualification. The Helsinki recommendations also offer a definition of the composition of Master degree programmes, which synthesized earlier discussions but also provoked new ones: normally, such a degree carries 90-120 ECTS credits, while the minimum requirements should amount "to 60 ECTS credits at Master level". As the length and the content of Bachelor degrees vary, there is a need to have similar flexibility at the Master level. Credits awarded should be of the "appropriate profile". However, Bachelor and Master degrees should have differently defined outcomes and should be awarded at different levels; they should be described on the basis of content, quality and learning outcomes, not only according to the duration of programmes or other formal characteristics. In principle, all Bachelor degrees should provide access to Master studies, and all Master degrees should give access to Doctoral studies. Master degree programmes should provide the learning skills needed to pursue further studies or research in a largely self-directed, autonomous manner. A transition from Master level to Doctoral studies without the formal award of a Master degree should also be possible if the candidate demonstrates the necessary abilities. Master degrees can be taken at universities, and in principle also at other higher education institutions. Programmes leading to a Master degree may have different orientations and various profiles to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. Differences in orientation or profile of programmes should not affect the "civil effect" [social value] of the Master degree.

67. These recommendations helped to broaden the scope from the two-tier structure alone to many detailed aspects of content, approach, methods, etc. *Tuning* gave an important message: a simple statement that there should be two successive cycles *is insufficient to make degrees comparable and compatible on a European level*. The first *Tuning* exercise made clear that the length of degree programmes (in terms of credits) is not an issue that stands by itself, but should be regarded as one crucial factor in the entire process of convergence of higher education: including the content, nature and level of study programmes.

Warnings have been heard that there is a constant danger of only superficial implementation of the new degree structures, and that systemic encouragement should be given to *strengthen attempts to renew curricula at the institutional level*. Pilot and developmental projects like *Tuning* could be of great help on this point. However, it has become obvious that while dissemination of good practice is extremely valuable, it doesn't suffice to achieve the stated objectives. Beyond specific needs for curricular reform at the institutional level, the current discussions about level descriptors, learning outcomes and qualification frameworks have opened a whole new systemic chapter that could be vital for the future of the Process.

In view of the results of the 2001-2003 follow-up period, the objective of a "system of easily readable and comparable degrees" as a distinctive feature of the EHEA can only be achieved if the next period will put the highest priority on the process of elaborating *national qualification frameworks*, possibly in relation to an overarching – broad but common – *European qualification framework*. This distinct idea was expressed not only at the seminars on degrees and qualification structures, but also at the Prague seminar on lifelong learning; it is also mentioned in various reports from other events and surveys.

68. The Danish follow-up seminar on *"Qualification structures in Higher Education in Europe"* **(14)** marked a turning point in the recent follow-up discussions. The central focus moved from the two-tier structure to more detailed issues: descriptors, levels, generic vs. subject-specific competences, workload, credit frameworks, learning outcomes, etc. The adoption of a common two-tier system was just a first step on the road towards EHEA. We must now work towards a deeper level of transparency about the types, principles, levels and purposes behind different (national) qualifications and their place in any overarching framework. Without such precise attention to detail, there is a danger that the creation of a common two-tier system masks significant differences among countries, institutions, etc. The outcomes of the Copenhagen seminar were a logical consequence of many former discussions, summed up at the right time and the right place.

In Copenhagen, a (national) framework of qualifications was defined as *a systemic description of all qualifications offered within a given education system as well as a description of how they relate to each other.*[26] Actually, all higher education systems have a qualifications network. However, traditional qualifications networks emphasize *input* factors and formal characteristics, while the novelty of the Copenhagen seminar was that it built on *output* factors such as learning outcomes. It also tended to be more explicit about some elements that were hitherto simply assumed. The *elaboration of a new qualifications framework* demands a refinement of the very concept of a "qualification". From that perspective, the traditional concepts of workload and level have been refined and are no longer expressed only in terms of "years of study"; the framework should not only describe how various qualifications interrelate, but also how students can progress from one qualification to another.

A national qualifications framework could provide much more precision and accuracy, and facilitate the key "Bologna objective" of transparency and comparability. From this point it is only a single step to an *EHEA qualifications framework* as an overarching concept: it would be primarily a general consensus about credits, levels, types of qualifications, systems and tools to describe them, etc. Thus, the Copenhagen seminar provided us with "a skeleton of a Bologna qualification structure".[27] It highlighted some experiences at national level (the examples of Denmark, Ireland, the UK; and Scotland generated particular interest among participants), but most countries are only just starting to plan this work. Therefore, intensive work on an *EHEA qualifications framework* could be very helpful to them, in particular if they will look for ways to "joint learning". Bringing together various national experiences in different contexts has always been useful.

69. The 2001–2003 follow up period put *the development of joint degrees* – an item which was stressed in the *Prague Communiqué* – high on its agenda. Two seminars (Stockholm and Mantova, **13**) were organized and a special survey was taken (see **37**, note 13). In practical terms, the problem was explored in a number of pilot projects, and ENIC/NARIC also approached it from the angle of recognition. However, referring to *Trends III*, joint curricula and joint degrees still do not receive sufficient attention from ministries and Rectors' Conferences. There is much more support at the level of institutions, but it seems that initiatives are still left to individual professors. At the follow-up seminars and other occasions, a consensus was reached that joint degrees – in principle Master and Doctoral – at the European level should become an important feature of European higher education, both to promote intra-European co-operation and to attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe.

Already at the *Stockholm seminar* (**13**), participants stated that joint degrees are important instruments for implementing the objectives set out in the *Bologna Declaration* and the *Prague Communiqué*: promoting student and teacher mobility, employability, quality, the European dimension and the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. Joint study programmes could provide an instrument for giving students the chance to gain academic and cultural experience abroad, and institutions of higher education an opportunity to co-operate. Such co-operation could exploit a wider range of competences and resources than those available at any single institution. Participants expressed a need for a common framework for joint degrees, tried to draft some criteria which could be useful common denominators for joint degrees in Europe, reminded us of the contents of the Council of Europe/UNESCO *Lisbon Recognition Convention* (1997) but also noted that in most countries a jointly awarded degree would require amendments to the national legislation. As also shown in the above-mentioned survey, very few countries have specific legal provisions regarding joint degrees; in

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[26] Adam, S., *Qualification Structures in European Higher Education*. To consider alternative approaches for clarifying the cycles and levels in European higher education qualifications. Danish Bologna Seminar, 27-28th March 2003.

[27] Qualification Structure in European Higher Education. Report by the General Rapporteur Sjur Bergan. København, March 27-28, 2003.

particular, *the award of a single degree on behalf of several institutions is still legally difficult*. When a joint degree is awarded as a national degree, it is recognized like any other foreign degree. If it is a real joint award of several institutions from various countries, it falls outside the framework of both national and international legislation and encounters problems of recognition.

70. This issue must be treated seriously and precisely. In fact, there are people who can deal with it: those from the ENIC and NARIC Networks. They already declared their willingness and ability to contribute to the Bologna process in 1999; since then, their support for the Process has been constant. At their meeting in May 2003, the Networks considered a far-reaching *Draft Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees*, to be submitted to the Convention Committee for adoption in 2004 (see **45**). The key is to improve recognition of joint degrees and other innovative initiatives aimed at increasing student mobility, bridging the gaps between national education systems, and increasing their readiness to contribute to these objectives. In this, they will build on the study and pilot on joint degrees at Master level carried out by the EUA (**37**, note 13).

This *Draft Recommendation* is based on various discussions referred to above (e.g. **12, 13, 37, 38**); it also refers to the *Lisbon Recognition Convention*, one of the key standards for the Bologna process. The *Convention* has a double function. In legal terms, it is a treaty between states, and as such it is valid as a *legal standard for the recognition of qualifications* awarded by the higher education systems of the parties to the *Convention* as well as the qualifications covered by its subsidiary texts. In a broader sense, it also serves as a *guide to good practice*, and in this sense its provisions can be applied to all higher education qualifications, regardless of their origin. (These are also major reasons why participants of the follow-up seminars and other events so often urged countries that have not yet ratified the Convention to do it at the earliest occasion.) Clearly, this message is part of Recommendations from the *Lisbon seminar* on "Recognition issues in the Bologna Process" of April 2002. By mid-2003, about two-thirds of the Bologna signatory countries had already ratified the Convention[28].

The main purpose of the new *Draft Recommendation* is to help ensure fair recognition for a kind of qualification that has considerable potential, but that is, in a strictly legal sense, not covered by the *Lisbon Recognition Convention*. It seeks to define joint degree as a generic term and to explore the main types of joint degrees. According to the Draft, joint degrees should be recognized at least as favourably as other qualifications from the education systems from which they originate. On the other hand, the *Draft* makes a case for reviewing national legislation (par. 9), which is quite in line with statements and recommendations expressed at some seminars: "Governments of States party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention should therefore review their legislation with a view to removing any legal obstacles to the recognition of joint degrees and, where appropriate, introduce legal provisions that would facilitate such recognition". At any rate, the next session of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (expected in spring 2004) will be an important further step towards EHEA; this again is a reason to speed up the ratification procedures in all countries – members of the Bologna process – which haven't yet ratified the Convention.

71. The *Mantova seminar* (**13**) gives new inputs to this issue. It affirmed again the high value of integrated curricula and joint degrees in reaching the EHEA objectives, and warned again against legislative obstacles. A report on "Joint Degrees: the Italian Experience in the European Context" provided some background information on the Italian case and attracted participants' attention as an example of good practice. The 1999 reform had already introduced the new possibility of awarding joint degrees to encourage the development of inter-university co-operation. Based on special agreements, Italian universities are legally enabled to give joint awards with other Italian or foreign universities. The rules governing procedures for the award of joint degrees are referred back to

[28] See http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/cadreprincipal.htm for detailed information (not only on Bologna countries). "Total number of ratifications/accessions: 33. Total number of signatures not followed by ratifications: 11. Status as of 19/07/03."

university teaching regulations. In the case of joint degrees between Italian universities, the degree itself should include a list of the universities that are parties to the agreement; in the case of joint degrees involving foreign universities, award procedures should be expressly governed by individual agreements, given the diversity of regulation among national education systems.

The Mantova seminar focused on the *curricular component of joint degree programmes*, based on the view that curricular integration – intended as joint curriculum design and implementation – is a necessary condition for awarding joint degrees. Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula were recognized again as most valuable instruments for developing European "citizenship" (i.e., cultural, linguistic and social experience) and European "employability" (i.e., competences necessary to have a successful professional life). Participants agreed that the future development of European joint degree programmes depends considerably on common criteria, as proposed already at the Stockholm seminar. Moreover, a clear distinction should be made between joint and double degree programmes, in terms of their curricular objectives and organizational models, also with a view to protecting students, and a complete glossary of terms should be drawn up for the purpose of evidence. Learning outcomes and competences, as well as student workload described in ECTS credits, should be seen as essential elements in constructing any joint programme. Adequate quality assurance procedures should be jointly developed and activated by partners in a joint programme, and made explicit to learners/users. Students, graduates, employers and other relevant actors should be consulted about the areas in which the implementation of joint degree programmes would be most appropriate. Higher education institutions – as partners for a joint degree programme – should be chosen on the basis of shared mission and clear commitment, as well as their capacity to develop and sustain such a programme in academic, organizational and financial terms. Thematic networks could provide experience for identifying suitable partners in any European country.

72. The Mantova seminar also stressed that joint doctoral programmes educating for research professions in Europe should be understood as a cornerstone for greater co-operation between EHEA and ERA. Synergy between the two areas is viewed as an essential prerequisite for the creation of a Europe of Knowledge. However, a need for *more structured Doctoral studies* in Europe has been expressed also at other occasions and in various discussions (**25**, **32**). Today, in half of the countries Doctoral students receive mainly individual supervision and tutoring, while in the other half taught Doctoral courses are offered in addition to individual (research) work. Increasing international co-operation and attempts to develop joint degrees demand more attention to comparable Doctorate degrees, first of all to ensure quality standards. Doctoral studies will certainly be a crucial lever of the knowledge society, and form an important element of the attractiveness of the EHEA. Therefore, an answer to *a need for a transparent, readable and comparable "third degree"* should be elaborated seriously in the next follow-up period 2003–2005.

2.3.2 Social dimensions

73. The majority of students, however, experience the emerging EHEA at their first- or second-cycle studies. National ministries and individual institutions encounter problems with student (and teacher) mobility mainly here. According to *Trends III*, *student and teacher mobility* has increased across Europe but there are obvious differences with regard to particular countries, types of mobility, etc. For instance, incoming mobility has grown more in the EU than in the accession countries. There is a clear distinction between "importers" and "exporters" of Erasmus students. Public funds have increased in the majority of EU countries but only in a minority of accession countries. In addition, language issues in mobility seem to become more important everywhere: in countries with "smaller" as well as in those with "broadly spoken" languages. These indicators show that some reconsideration of academic mobility is urgent today, on the institutional, national and international level.

The good news is that an important tool to strengthen mobility – the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) – is clearly emerging as the European credit system. ECTS, initiated already in late 1980s, was developed by the European Commission to facilitate the transfer of competence earned at one

institution or within one higher education system to another institution or system. It has achieved this by developing a standard unit expressing workload – the ECTS credit, 60 of which constitute an average workload for an academic year – as well as a standardized grading scheme. In recent years, it has become a legal requirement in many countries. According to *Trends III*, two thirds of institutions today use ECTS for *credit transfer* (and 15% use a different but compatible system). *Trends III* also reports that three quarters of institutions declare that they have introduced credit accumulation, but the authors of the report worry about possible insufficient understanding of the particularities of a *credit accumulation system*. Therefore, efforts of institutions and, in particular, EUA activities in this field are exceptionally important for actual implantation of credit transfer and accumulation in the real lives of students. In this regard, the central event of the period 2001 – 2003 was the Zürich follow-up seminar (**12**), in fact a conference on "Credit Transfer and Accumulation – the Challenge for Institutions and Students".

As a credit transfer and accumulation system, ECTS is the tool that could contribute most to the Bologna objectives, first of all by improving transparency and comparability of study programmes and qualifications, and secondly by facilitating the mutual recognition of qualifications. The conference stressed the *conceptual basis of ECTS*: it is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme. These objectives are preferably specified in terms of learning outcomes. Therefore, a successful implantation of ECTS could not be done in a mechanistic way (e.g. re-calculating traditional contact hours into credits) but in fact demands thorough curricular reform at the institution level. Credits are not automatically interchangeable from one context to another. They can only be used to obtain a recognized qualification when they constitute an approved part of a study programme. The seminar also emphasized that ECTS must be developed to include the concept of *level*. The Zürich Conference demonstrated that Europe's universities recognize the importance of credit transfer and accumulation for the future development of the EHEA, and accept their own responsibilities in this process. This means that on the basis of the key features agreed in Zürich, institutions need to be able to apply ECTS in a transparent but flexible way, taking into account their own specific missions and priorities. The EUA Graz Convention confirmed this position a few months later.

74. Another useful instrument is being introduced in a growing number of countries: the *Diploma Supplement (DS)*. In many countries, institutions are now obliged by law to issue it to their students once they earn their degrees. It has been developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, aiming at describing a qualification in terms of the education system within which it was earned. The Diploma Supplement can also be adapted to qualifications – such as joint degrees – earned within two or more higher education systems. The Diploma Supplement – which is an addition to and not a substitute for the original diploma – contains information on the student, the institution and programme, the competences earned and the higher education system. It could be particularly valuable for students (learners) in the context of lifelong learning, as was confirmed also at the Prague follow-up seminar (**16**). At this seminar, another useful but less widely used tool was presented and discussed: *a portfolio*. Where the various kinds of educational experiences could not be readily described through the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS, these *transparency instruments* could be brought together with the remaining elements in a portfolio, describing all the relevant experience, skills and competences that constitute the person's overall achievements. One possible model could be the *European Language Portfolio*, developed by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division to describe a person's competencies in foreign languages, whether formally certified or not, according to a list of well established criteria of fluency. In the case of computing skills, the EU has developed a *European Driving License*. In the case of many lifelong learning experiences, an important aspect is that candidates are closely involved in creating their own portfolios.

75. At first glance, ECTS, Diploma Supplement and similar tools belong probably more to the "structural dimension" of the Bologna process, but their importance for mobility, transparency, employment, etc. also argues for classifying them as part of the "social dimension". Of course, such a division is only conditional, and various questions should always be asked about their interdependence. However, seminars and other events of the follow up period 2001–2003 contributed

directly and importantly to clarifying social issues. In this regard, three seminars are of special importance, each of them in its particular line: the Athens seminar which directly stressed the "Social Dimension of the EHEA", the Oslo seminar on "Student Participation in Governance" (for both see **15**) but also the Prague seminar on "Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning" (**16**). The social dimension in higher education is mostly discussed with reference to new entrants and young students; however, it is extremely important to understand this issue in a lifelong perspective. The Prague seminar only opened the door to this enormously spacious area, and therefore it deserves appropriate priority in the next follow-up period. Moreover, student participation in higher education governance is, last but not least, a "school of citizenship", and therefore should receive more attention from this specific angle.

Broad access to higher education has become a key topic of the last decades. On the one hand, it presumes and requests changes of structures; on the other, it really widened access and increased numbers of candidates for higher education and students. This raises serious questions about studying and living conditions, and about systemic removal of obstacles related to students' social and economic backgrounds. Introduction and maintenance of social support schemes for students, including grants (portable as far as possible), loan schemes, health care and insurance, housing and academic and social counselling become *equally important issues for the successful establishment of the EHEA as changes in higher education structures*. We made reference to this point on several previous occasions. At the same time, with a growing student body it is more and more important to consider the issue of students' participation in governance of higher education (institutions) very carefully. Finally, participants at the Prague seminar underlined the importance of improving the possibilities of all citizens to follow lifelong learning paths, established within qualifications frameworks in accordance with their aspirations and abilities. "Prague" recommended that we explore how this goal may be achieved, in preparation for the Ministerial conference of 2005.

76. Another frequent theme has been the dispute on GATS in relation to issues resulting from the emerging global market for higher education services and trans-national provision of education, and stimulated by the increasing demand for study places and radical new possibilities based on ICT. These changes are leading to a growing trend towards global competition in higher education. This trend is a real challenge to the creation of the EHEA and to its potential attractiveness on a global level; however, discussions at follow-up seminars and other events (in particular the important discussion at UNESCO's *Second Global Forum* in Oslo; see **58**) showed that real changes should be based on academic values, respect for diversity, and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world. *How to achieve a balance between competition and co-operation?* This remains a difficult dilemma, with enormous relevance for the Bologna process.

Closely related to these themes, the recent period has also broached the issue of higher education as a public good and public responsibility. Participants in the Athens seminar (**15**) reaffirmed the commitment of the *Prague Communiqué* to consider higher education a public good, and stressed that any negotiations about trade in education services must not jeopardize the responsibility of financing the public education sector. Much uneasiness was expressed with regard to procedures in the GATS negotiations. They further stressed that recognition agreements and the right of countries to implement quality assurance mechanisms should not be put in question, in particular because no experts from the higher education sector have been consulted. Here, we should quote a minor - but not marginal - comment from the Oslo *Global Forum*: "In future, governments should ensure that their ministers of trade talk to their ministers of education"!

3. STEERING OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

77. The steering bodies of the Bologna process have been responsible for the successful implementation of decisions from Prague; in particular, to explore the most important issues through a series of follow-up seminars, carefully prepared in advance and attracting all partners. On the other

hand, they also had to take care of the steering process itself: to reflect on and evaluate their own work, advantages and deficiencies of structures, and methods developed since Bologna and Prague. This chapter aims to sum up the main data about the establishment and work of both steering groups, as well as findings on possible improvements of steering the Process.

3.1 The work of BFUG and BPG

78. In the *Prague Communiqué*, Ministers committed themselves to continuing their co-operation based on the objectives set out in the *Bologna Declaration*. They also confirmed the need for a structure for the follow-up work, consisting of a follow-up group and a preparatory group: "The follow-up group should be composed of representatives of all signatories, new participants and the European Commission, and should be chaired by the EU Presidency at the time. The preparatory group should be composed of representatives of the countries hosting the previous ministerial meetings and the next ministerial meeting, two EU member states and two non-EU member states; these latter four representatives will be elected by the follow-up group. The EU Presidency at the time and the European Commission will also be part of the preparatory group. The preparatory group will be chaired by the representative of the country hosting the next ministerial meeting." The *Communiqué* also stated: "The European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) and the Council of Europe should be consulted in the follow-up work". Ministers finally encouraged the Bologna follow-up group to arrange a series of international seminars to explore the most important issues: "co-operation concerning accreditation and quality assurance, recognition issues and the use of credits in the Bologna process, the development of joint degrees, the social dimension with specific attention to obstacles to mobility, the enlargement of the Bologna process, lifelong learning and student involvement".

79. Immediately after Prague, new inter-governmental structures for the Bologna process and a work programme for the period between Prague and Berlin were established. Based on decisions of the *Prague Communiqué*, the former "enlarged group" – with four new members: Croatia, Cyprus, Turkey and Liechtenstein – became the *Follow-up Group of the Bologna Process* (BFUG). The group met in September 2001 at the first meeting after the Prague Summit. The former steering group was abolished, as the steering task had become entirely the competence of BFUG, presided over by the consecutive EU-Presidencies, i.e. Belgium (2nd semester 2001), Spain (1st semester 2002), Denmark (2nd semester 2002), Greece (1st semester 2003) and Italy (2nd semester 2003).

80. At the same meeting, BFUG established the *Bologna Preparatory Group* (BPG), chaired by Germany as the host country of the next ministerial meeting. BFUG outlined an agenda which dictated the organization of the following meetings: the group discussed the first outline of the Berlin Summit and plans for the follow-up activities in general, responsibilities of the BPG, information from the Commission and other organizations, information about seminars of international relevance which member countries intended to organize, etc. BFUG decided to centre the proposed seminars and other events on these topics, as chosen in Prague.

The topics were later developed into *six clusters* (as can be clearly seen in retrospect, this programme can also be read as consisting of *two major components*: a complex of issues on *degree structures and qualifications* on the one hand and *the social dimension of higher education* on the other). The clusters are as follows:

(1) co-operation concerning accreditation and quality assurance;
(2) recognition issues and the use of credits;
(3) development of joint degrees;
(4) degrees and qualification structures;
(5) social dimension of the Bologna process, with special attention to obstacles of mobility

and student involvement;
(6) lifelong learning in higher education.

81. During the period 2001-2003, BFUG met six times (Brussels, 13 September 2001; Santander, 24 May 2002; Copenhagen, 4 November 2002; Athens, 18 February 2003; Athens, 20-21 June 2003; Berlin, 17 September 2003) but also extensively used IT as their means of communication. At its sessions, BFUG constantly monitored the Bologna process: taking note of information on meetings of the BPG and discussing its proposals and initiatives, in particular preparation and organization of the Berlin Summit; paying constant attention to the preparation and results of official Bologna seminars as well as to other scheduled meetings, events and initiatives related to the Bologna process, etc. Because of the large number of seminars, it was agreed that for each seminar a special rapporteur would be appointed.

BFUG also discussed important issues of the enlargement of the Bologna process and new applications for access, as well as some less visible but no less important themes such as the Bologna process and the issue of languages. It also formed a few working groups to prepare particular issues for discussion. At its second meeting, BFUG appointed the general rapporteur who joined the work of both groups and prepared this report with their enormous and generous help. However, BFUG devoted most of its working time and expertise to a discussion about possible directions for the further development of the Bologna process and to considerations of issues important for the drafting of the *Berlin Communiqué*.

82. The BPG was inaugurated and seated at its first working meeting immediately after its election. In the period 2001-2003, it met altogether nine times (Brussels, 13 September 2001; Brussels, 12 December 2001; Brussels, 21 February 2002; Santander, 23 May 2002; Brussels, 19 September 2002; Berlin, 9 December 2002; Athens, 17 February 2003; Athens, 19 June 2003; Berlin, 17 September 2003). BPG has been responsible for the concrete preparation of the Berlin Summit and assumed a key role in collecting and managing the necessary information. It was important that a small team was set up in Berlin early on, as well as an official website (www.bologna-berlin2003.de) to support these tasks. The website covers valuable information of the previous Paris, Bologna, Salamanca and Prague meetings and existing translations of earlier "Bologna" documents, but it also enlarged the scope to include important news and events, interesting links, national legislation and reports, position papers on the Bologna process by other organizations, stakeholder associations, etc.

The group was also given a mandate to get in contact with stakeholders (e.g. employers, trade-unions, etc.) or organizations with special expertise (e.g. accreditation, etc.) not directly represented in the "Bologna Structures". Thus, BPG held occasional hearings on the Bologna process with representatives of those bodies, for example with the Steering Group of the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA), UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES), Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and with the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE).

3.2 Evaluation and a proposal for further "handling" of the Process

83. The existing practice of steering the Bologna process has regularly been the subject of reflection. Already at its Santander meeting, BFUG's working party on Further Accessions (**49**) made some important observations on the issue of steering the Process, when it found that its basic question – accessions - is linked to setting milestones and stock-taking (**51**). The BPG meeting in Athens in February 2003 went even more into details of how the future follow-up process should be structured after the Berlin Summit; it reported its findings to the BFUG. It was concluded that – in the interest of efficiency and a continuous flow of information, but also in the light of the ongoing discussion on a European Convention – more permanent structures for the further follow-up work might be envisaged. Three possible models were discussed: (a) either the present structure is maintained (with a clear

sharing of tasks between BPG and BFUG); (b) or BFUG retains its rotating chair but is assisted by a permanent secretariat, (c) or BFUG will be headed by a permanent chair and assisted by a permanent secretariat. BPG asked a working group (Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Italy) to analyze and evaluate the existing steering structure and to prepare a discussion document for the next BFUG meeting in June 2003.

84. At its June meeting in Athens, BFUG received from BPG a document proposing several variants. The heading of this document[29] reflects the complexity of the issue, but gives also a taste of the jargon developed in the friendly and constructive atmosphere of both groups. Following the minutes of the BPG's February session, the working group analyzed the three alternative designs. According to the first, the present structure would be maintained with a clearer sharing of tasks between BPG and BFUG ("present structure"). According to the second, BFUG would retain its rotating chair but be assisted by a permanent secretariat ("rotating chair"). According to the third alternative, BFUG would be headed by a permanent chair and assisted by a permanent secretariat ("permanent chair"). The working group analysed all three designs, looking at the working structures thus far put in place after Bologna, and at the needs for further development of the process after Berlin, especially with a view to the working programme to be defined in the *Berlin Communiqué*.

In its findings, the working group stated that, in view of the widening tasks and increasing frequency of meetings and seminars, the Bologna Process is developing more and more into a range of complex activities based on the common political will of ministers and aiming at strengthening the *international co-operation* between all member states and partners. The Process also fosters the *inter-dependent link* between international co-operation and national implementation of actions into policy, and the goal of creating the EHEA by 2010. The main tasks of the steering structures in the coming years will be – among others – (1) to organize the further follow-up programme after the *Berlin Communiqué*, (2) to organize the stock-taking exercise, (3) to secure continuity and further clarification of the principles of the Bologna process, (4) to secure close co-operation with relevant stakeholders and (5) to prepare the next ministerial conference.

It was underlined that the agreements between signatory countries are of a purely political nature and without any supra-national power of endorsement. Therefore, any working-structure of the Bologna process must be clearly founded on strong involvement of the competent national authorities. The necessary *link between national implementation and international co-operation* can be guaranteed only by getting all members involved, and by giving them a chance of active participation. This argument requires a large group with an overall responsibility for following up on the decisions of ministers, and preparing the ministerial conference. On the other hand the demanding and comprehensive programme after Berlin will - as present experiences show - *require even more than before an effective administrative as well as content-regarding working structure*. The large group couldn't manage this task efficiently; therefore a proposal was made that inclines towards a smaller steering group with support from a permanent secretariat.

85. On the basis of these considerations, BFUG at its June 2003 meeting was confronted with three variants. BFUG members were asked to communicate their preferences before the meeting in order to facilitate discussion and decision. From the beginning, it was obvious that the first variant ("present model") has simply no supporters. The second variant ("rotating chair") was presented in two slightly different forms (2a – with a smaller task force, and 2b – with a larger Board). After the first round of discussion, interest was distributed among the three variants 2a, 2b and 3 ("permanent chair", with a larger Board), without a clear majority for any of them.

This could mean that the discussion came to a dead end. However, combining the votes led to the identification of two separate majorities: one in favour of the "rotating chair" (variants 2a+2b) and one in favour of a "larger Board" (variants 2b+3). Encouraged by the chair, BFUG found that the

[29] Bologna Preparatory Group. *Handling the Bologna Process*. 6 June 2003.

combination of the two majorities crosses at the model 2b, and this variant prevailed as a realistic compromise. BFUG decided to ask the Ministers to approve the proposed change of steering structures of the Bologna process in the adequate paragraph of the *Berlin Communiqué*. Responsibilities of the Board and of the Secretariat have not yet been specified. If Ministerial approval is given, they will be specified at the first meeting of the Follow-up group after the Berlin Summit. Similarly, the elections procedure for the three countries to be elected for the Board should be prepared, probably in a similar way to the procedure that was followed after Prague for the two elected members in the BPG 2001-2003.

4. Paper and WWW Goldmine

86. In the following "Goldmine" – the expression is borrowed from *Tuning* colleagues –bibliographic and Internet sources are listed. In principle, the bibliography is limited to the period 2001-2003 and presents only most the relevant "Bologna" documents and studies produced during this period and referred to in this report. Only a few key documents that emerged earlier – and are referred to in this report – are also added.

Numerous presentations and contributions from official Bologna follow-up seminars and other events have been routinely posted on the Internet; our bibliography here would become unwieldy if *all* inputs of the last two years (surveys, papers, presentations, information, documents, statements, etc.) were included. Internet sources are divided into three categories to facilitate access to websites where an enormous quantity of documents, studies, links and other information produced during the 2001-2003 Bologna follow-up period is available.

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4.2.1 Governmental and nongovernmental international organizations

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Council's of Europe "Bologna Web Site"
http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural%5FCo%2Doperation/education/Higher%5Feducation/Activities/Bologna%5FProcess/ and
http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Higher_education/

EC - European Commission / DG Education and Culture
http://leuropa.eu.int/comm/education.html and
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/area.html

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ECTS – European Credit Transfer System
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/ectswww.html

E-LEARNING - The *e*Learning initiative of the European Commission
http://www.elearningeuropa.info/

ESIB - The National Union of Students in Europe
http://www.esib.org

ETUCE - The European Trade Union Committee for Education
http://www.ei-ie.org/etuce/english/eetuceindex.htm

EUA – European University Association
http://www.unige.ch.eua

EURASHE - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
http://www.euroshare.be/info/info.htm

OECD – Directorate for Education
http://www.oecd.org/department/0,2688,en_2649_33723_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

UNESCO
http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/index.html

UNESCO/CEPES - European Centre for Higher Education
http://www.cepes.ro/

4.2.2 National and/or regional multilingual "Bologna Web Sites"

Adriatic-Ionian initiative
http://www.uniadrion.unibo.it/

Austrian "Bologna Web Site"
http://www.bologna.at

Danish "Bologna Web Site"
http://www.videnskabsministeriet.dk/cgi-bin/theme-list.cgi?theme_id=137751

Nordic Space for Higher Education
http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Nordic.pdf

South East European Educational Co-operation Network – "Bologna pages"
http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_bologna.htm

4.2.3 Organizations, networks and projects with specific relevance to "Bologna issues"

ACA - Academic Co-operation Association – "Study in Europe"
http://www.study-in-europe.org/

ACE - Admission officers and credential evaluators
http://www.aic.lv/ace/

AEC - Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
http://www.aecinfo.org/

ALPINE - Adults Learning and Participating in Education
http://www.qub.ac.uk/alpine/

CEL-ELC - The European Language Council
http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/en/index.html

CESAER - The Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research
http://www.cesaer.org/

http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/index.html

EADTU - European Association of Distance Teaching Universities
http://www.eadtu.nl/

EAIE - European Association for International Education
http://www.eaie.nl

EAN - European Access Network
http://www.wmin.ac.uk/ean/

ELFA – European Law Faculties Association
http://elfa.bham.ac.uk/

ELIA - The European League of Institutes of the Arts
http://www.elia-artschools.org/

ENIC and NARIC networks
http://www.enic-naric.net

ENQA - European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
http://www.enqa.net/

EUDORA - European Doctorate of Teaching and Teacher Education;
IP EPAC – Intensive Programme Education Policy Analysis in a Comparative Perspective
www.pa-linz.ac.at/international/Alert/Tntee/Tntee_publication/menu.htm

EURYDICE – The information network on education in Europe
http://www.eurydice.org/

EURODOC - The Council for Postgraduate Students and Junior Researchers in Europe
http://www.eurodoc.net/

FEANI - European Federation of National Engineering Associations
http://www.feani.org/

ICE-PLAR - International Credential Evaluators and Prior Learning Assessors
http://www.ice-plar.net

JOINT QUALITY INITIATIVE
http://www.jointquality.org/

PLOTEUS - The Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space
http://www.ploteus.net

SEFI - European Society for Engineering Education
http://www.sefi.be/

TEEP - Trans-National European Evaluation Project
http://www.fys.ku.dk./undervisning/temp/teep_2002.htm

TNTEE - Thematic Network on Teacher Education
http://tntee.umu.se/

TRANSFINE -Transfer between formal, informal and non formal education
http://www.transfine.net

TUNING educational structures in Europe
http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm

5. ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
BPG	Bologna Preparatory Group
CD-ESR	Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research
CEPES	UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education
CESAER	Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research
CHEPS	Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (University of Twente)
D-A-CH-Network	A network among German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland)
DS	Diploma Supplement
EAN	European Access Network
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EUDORA	European Doctorate of Teaching and Teacher Education
ELFA	European Law Faculties Association
ELIA	European League of Institutes of the Arts
ENQA	European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EUA	European University Association
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions of Higher Education
ESIB	National Unions of Students in Europe
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education

GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
ICE-PLAR	International Credential Evaluators and Prior Learning Assessors
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SEFI	European Society for Engineering Education
TEEP	Trans-National European Evaluation Project
TNTEE	Thematic Network on Teacher Education in Europe
UNICE	Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe

6. ANNEXES

Recommendations from the official Follow-up Seminars

6.1. Quality Assurance and Accreditation

6.1.1. "Working on the European Dimension of Quality"

Ministry of Education, Netherlands, Flemish Community of Belgium (Departement van Onderwijs), Germany (HRK), CHEPS; Amsterdam, Netherlands, 12-13 March 2002

Consensus, Issues and Questions. Some Results of the Conference.[30]

8.2. Descriptors of Bachelor and Master Programmes at Different Levels

There is a widely-shared consensus that the 'Dublin Descriptors', defining key outcomes for Bachelors and Masters programmes in general (see paper 'Towards shared descriptors for Bachelors and Masters') are useful. These generic descriptors are complementary to the more specific outcomes of the *Tuning* project, which have been developed at the level of areas of knowledge ('disciplines'). In other words, the 'Dublin Descriptors' need to be 'tuned'. Moreover, the Tuning project outcomes are not to be taken as prescriptive. In that respect, it should be remembered that outcomes do not define curricula

Gains from the Tuning project further include that there is a broader than expected consensus among European higher education institutions on descriptors of their programmes, starting from outcomes rather than starting from curriculum inputs and elements. At the same time, there is less than expected diversity regarding length/credits of programmes in specific disciplines. The approach to quality building on a combination of the 'Dublin Descriptors' and Tuning project outcomes apply to 'traditional' delivery of higher education as well as to transnational education, distance education, etc.

8.3. Quality Assurance at Different Levels

A discussion arose on the relative value of programme vs. institutional approaches to quality assurance. Both are important, was the general view. The 'Dublin Descriptors' as well as the Tuning project outcomes are directed primarily at programme level approaches. Many, including expressly the student representatives, gave programme level quality assessment the priority for public policy, *inter alia* because this gives more direct assurance of quality ('consumer protection'). Institutional quality assurance was mostly seen as a responsibility of autonomous, well-managed higher education institutions, even though some participants voiced the opinion that with 'mass' or 'universal' higher education, and in the emerging network society, such coherent higher education institutions will become ever rarer.

8.4. Questions: What needs to be addressed in next steps?

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[30] Westerheijden, F. D., Leegwater, M. (eds.), *Working on the European Dimension of Quality. Report of the conference on quality assurance in higher education as part of the Bologna process.* Amsterdam, 12-13 March 2002. Zoetermeer: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, 2003, pp. 97-99. - Rapporteurs: Marijke van der Wende & Don Westerheijden.

Capitalising on the broad consensus among the conference participants, next steps could be proposed, during which the following issues will need to be addressed.

An application question

1. What is the right balance between generic and specific for accreditation frameworks and criteria? Cross-border quality assessment projects will play a role in the learning process to develop a common understanding at a European level.

Ownership and participation questions

2. Who is involved in (a) developing criteria for accreditation / quality assessment, (b) updating criteria for accreditation / quality assessment, (c) criteria in actual accreditation / quality assessment?
3. What are the implications of answers to the previous questions for acceptance of consequences by the higher education community and society of consequences of (non-) accreditation?

Implications for higher education institutions?

4. Higher education institutions have to develop their 'accreditation capacity': how to elicit all information necessary for different quality assessment or accreditation agencies?
5. How to maintain quality improvement in a context of increasing attention for accreditation? Could institutional evaluation be a major tool on that account?
6. What is or should be their involvement in the current quality initiatives? Involvement of the higher education institutions is needed on the one hand to develop curricula responding to the frameworks as part of their institutional autonomy, because frameworks couched in terms of outcomes do not define curricula in terms of content and instructional design.
7. An associated question of involvement regards the input higher education institutions can give into frameworks or criteria defined or handled by quality assessment agencies or accreditation agencies.

Transnational education

8. The specific issue of quality assurance of transnational education, especially in the form of collaborative frameworks (commonly known as 'franchising' arrangements, but actually broader than that) was also dealt with in this conference.
9. The main question in this respect concerns the balance between responsibility for quality by 'sender' and by 'receiver'. Participants broadly agreed that the Code of Good Practice (developed by UNESCO and Council of Europe) with its principle that both 'sender' and 'receiver' take responsibility is indeed a good practice.

6.2. Recognition Issues and the Use of Credits

6.2.1. "Recognition issues in the Bologna Process"

Council of Europe, Ministry of Education, Portugal; Lisboa, Portugal, 11-12 April 2002.

Recommendations[31]

To the higher education institutions

- Develop discussion on learning outcomes and competences, in order to help move recognition procedures away from formal issues such as length of study and names of courses, and towards procedures based on the results of student learning
- Continue to develop co-operation between institutions leading to joint degrees and other forms of automatic recognition, as confidence building measures leading to more widespread acceptance of mutual recognition
- Examine what information is provided regarding recognition procedures at the institution, to ensure students and other stakeholders are correctly informed
- Examine how this information is provided, to ensure that it is easily accessible in a transparent and effective way
- Ensure adequate internal structures, to ensure that recognition procedures are carried out in an efficient and transparent manner
- Develop appropriate human resources and staff policies to meet the challenges, especially to ensure that all staff (academic and administrative) are fully aware of European best practice in the field
- Include recognition issues and procedures in your internal quality assurance procedures, to continue to develop these fields for the benefit of the institution, its staff and students.

To academic networks, including student organisations

- Ensure your members are fully aware of recognition issues and practices, in order to develop a more coherent approach to these issues across Europe
- Monitor recognition issues affecting your members, in order to take action where necessary and to provide feedback to the European higher education community on areas of best practice or concern
- Develop consensus on learning outcomes and competences, in order to promote a European approach in these fields.

To ENIC and NARIC networks

- Examine ways in which a European virtual recognition platform could be developed, making accumulated existing knowledge and experience more visible and accessible, in order to promote existing good practice and to ensure widespread European visibility and awareness
- Develop co-operation and exchange with national and European quality assurance bodies, to ensure that recognition issues are also covered by quality assurance procedures
- Examine the feasibility of supplying standard guidance to prospective students (e.g. in the form of a fact sheet on recognition issues and a list of basic questions which they should take into consideration), to assist students regarding what to look for and which questions to ask when choosing institutions and dealing with recognition issues
- Assist the relevant academic and other partners in developing frameworks for the description of learning outcomes

[31] Integral text. - Rapporteur: Lewis Purser, EUA.

- Examine the feasibility of creating an international working group to develop a European code of good practice for the provision of recognition information

To governments

- Provide incentives for the reform of institutional management practice in the field of recognition, to encourage higher education institutions to develop effective and efficient institutional procedures when dealing with recognition issues
- Ensure legislation is adequate and forward looking, to ensure that higher education institutions and recognition bodies are in a position to apply best European practice
- Ensure adequate human and financial resources at Ministry, ENIC/NARIC and institutional level to meet the new challenges of recognition
- Ensure an integrated national system for recognition is available via the ENIC/NARIC, to provide a clearly visible one-stop-shop for students and other stakeholders in each country
- Include recognition issues in the remit of appropriate quality assurance bodies.

To the Council of Europe, possibly in partnership with UNESCO, the European Commission and other international governmental and non-governmental organisations

- Monitor the implementation of the Lisbon Convention and how measures are applied in individual countries, including any gaps between implementation and the legal provisions, in order to provide feedback to the Bologna Process, national governments, the European academic community, including students and other stakeholders
- Examine the feasibility of developing a tool for use by citizens to gauge their own competences, as a contribution to the discussion on learning outcomes and competences, and as a way to encourage access to higher education and/or the labour market

To Ministers responsible for Higher Education, who will meet in Berlin in 2003

- In response to concerns expressed by a part of the higher education community, including some students, make clear that new degree structures should continue to ensure that higher education promotes three main qualities in its graduates:
- Preparation for the labour market
- Preparation for active citizenship
- Preparation for continued personal development
- Encourage further work at national and European levels on the issue of learning outcomes
- Encourage the development of a stronger European awareness of recognition issues, by strengthening existing networks and promoting more open access to relevant information
- Invite all European States of the Bologna Process to ratify the Lisbon Convention, as a major element to facilitate the creation of the European Higher Education Area.

6.2.2. "Credit Transfer and Accumulation – The Challenge for Institutions and Students"

EUA and Swiss Confederation; Zürich, Switzerland, 11-12 October 2002

Conclusions and Recommendations for Action[32]

II. ECTS: a credit system for Europe

Over the last decade, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been successfully introduced in Socrates ERASMUS. Primarily for facilitating European mobility, ECTS has therefore been used on a small scale as a credit transfer system, impacting upon a relatively small number of students. The further development of ECTS into a credit accumulation system at national level, speeded up by the Bologna process, effectively means mainstreaming ECTS as a generalised credit system for the emerging EHEA, and thus is of key importance for Europe's higher education institutions and students.

III. Objectives

As a credit transfer system:
- to facilitate transfer of students between European countries, and in particular to enhance the quality of student mobility in ERASMUS and thus to facilitate academic recognition;
- to promote key aspects of the European dimension[33] in Higher Education.

As an accumulation system:
- to support widespread curricular reform in national systems;
- to enable widespread mobility both inside systems (at institutional and national level) and internationally;
- to allow transfer from outside the higher education context, thus facilitating Lifelong Learning and the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and promoting greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes;
- to facilitate access to the labour market;
- to enhance the transparency and comparability of European systems, therefore also to promote the attractiveness of European higher education towards the outside world.

As a credit transfer and accumulation system, the key goals of ECTS are:
- to improve transparency and comparability of study programmes and qualifications;
- to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications.

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[32] Integral text; only a short general introductory remark on context excluded. - Rapporteur: Prof. Konrad Osterwalder, ETH Zurich.

[33] Cf. the *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community, 1991:* this refers to student mobility; cooperation between institutions; Europe in the curriculum; the central importance of language; the training of teachers; recognition of qualifications and periods of study; the international role of higher education; information and policy analysis; dialogue with the higher education sector.

IV. Key features

- The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a student-centred system based on the *student workload* required to achieve the objectives of a programme, objectives preferably specified in terms of *learning outcomes*.
- ECTS is based on the convention that 60 credits measure the notional workload of an average full time student during one academic year. This includes the time spent in attending lectures, seminars, independent study, preparation for and taking of examinations, etc
- Credits are allocated to all educational and training components of a study programme (such as modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.) and reflect the quantity of work each component requires in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of study in the programme considered.
- Credits can be obtained only after completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved.
- ECTS presupposes use of a minimum number of essential tools, first and foremost respect for the *Learning Agreement* which in terms of student mobility and credit transfer has to be concluded, before departure, between the student and the responsible academic bodies of the two institutions concerned. The use of Learning Agreements should also be extended to home students for registering study options and programmes.[34]
- As an accumulation system, ECTS credits are used to describe entire study programmes. The basis for the allocation of credits is the official length of the study programme. There is broad agreement that first cycle degrees lasting three to four years require 180-240 credit points.
- Credits are not interchangeable automatically from one context to another and can only be applied to the completion of a recognised qualification when they constitute an approved part of a study programme.
- The Diploma Supplement and ECTS are complementary tools for enhancing transparency, and facilitating recognition.

V. Towards Graz and Berlin: next steps

Europe's Universities

The Zürich Conference demonstrated that Europe's universities recognise the importance of credit transfer and accumulation for the future development of the EHEA and accept their own responsibilities in this process. This means that on the basis of the key features agreed in Zürich institutions need to be able to apply ECTS in a transparent but flexible way taking into account their own specific mission and priorities.

This in turn requires:

- Institutional commitment ensuring that especially the institutional leadership is informed of the objectives and key features of ECTS and its full potential for supporting curricular reform, and not just as a support for international co-operation;
- Assessing the cost and benefits of developing and expanding ECTS and allocating sufficient human and financial resources for its implementation and proper use;
- Developing appropriate instruments to ensure adequate monitoring and evaluation.

[34] Other essential ECTS tools are the Course Catalogue and the Transcript of Records.

The European University Association (EUA)

EUA will:

- Encourage and support its members in the implementation of the Zürich recommendations at institutional level;
- Through its Socrates supported ECTS monitoring and institutional visit programme follow-up the following open questions identified during discussions in Zürich:
    - The role of ECTS in the development of joint degrees;
    - The introduction and use of ECTS at doctoral level;
    - The ECTS grading scale and national credit systems;
    - Linking credits and different levels of study;
    - ECTS and quality: as an instrument for promoting transparency ECTS facilitates the dialogue on quality in a comparative perspective;
- Take forward the outcomes of the Zürich Conference to the Graz Convention of European Higher Education Institutions (May 2003);
- Present the recommendations formally to the Bologna Follow-Up Group for inclusion in the preparation of the Berlin Ministers' meeting (September 2003).

EUA Brussels, 12. 11. 2002

6.3. Development of Joint Degrees

6.3.1. "Development of Joint Degrees"

Ministry of Education and Science, Sweden; Stockholm, Sweden, 30-31 May 2002

The Stockholm Conclusions[35]

The Bologna objectives. Joint degrees are important instruments for implementing the objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué: promoting student and teacher mobility, employability, quality, the European dimension and the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Joint study programmes could provide an instrument for giving students the chance to gain academic and cultural experience abroad and institutions of higher education an opportunity to co-operate. Such co-operation could exploit wider competences and resources than those available at any single institution.

These conclusions concern joint degrees in a system of higher education essentially based on two main cycles.

Framework. The basis for joint degrees in the EHEA is established in the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué, which stress the importance of transparency and compatibility.

A common framework for joint degrees must be flexible in order to allow for and reflect national differences, but it must also include a definition of a joint degree, which will serve as a basis for a legal framework at the national level. The national, legal base must be clear on the conditions for awarding a joint degree and must not limit co-operation between institutions.

The national authorities should also be reminded of the contents of the Lisbon Convention.

In most countries a jointly awarded degree would require amendments to the national higher education legislation. In various countries higher education institutions are increasingly developing bilateral or multilateral degrees (Dutch-Flemish Hogeschool, French-German University, Italian-French University, Danish-Swedish Öresund University, for example). There is, however, reluctance towards and no legal foundation for establishing joint degrees at the supranational level.

General and professional degrees. Most countries consider joint degrees possible in both general and professional degree fields but expect difficulties in establishing joint degrees in regulated professions. Attempts should, however, be made and the density of regulations should be reduced.

Quality assurance. Documented quality assurance is necessary to guarantee the international acceptance and competitiveness of joint degrees on the world education and employment markets. On the basis of mutual trust and general acceptance of national assurance systems, principles and general standards for quality assurance and accreditation should be developed. Joint study programmes which adhere to these principles and standards could use an EHEA label, which could be established within the framework of the Bologna Process and supervised by the national authorities.

It is essential that the national quality assurance agencies co-operate within European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA), in accordance with the Prague Communiqué.

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[35] Integral text. - Ministry of Education and Science; Stockholm, Sweden.

Structure. It should be possible to award joint degrees in each cycle, including doctoral studies.

Criteria. The following criteria could be useful common denominators for European joint degrees:

- Two or more participating institutions in two or more countries.
- The duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial and continuous, e.g. 1 year at bachelor level.
- Joint degrees should require a joint study programme settled on by co-operation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions.
- Joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes, with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects.
- Full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications.
- A joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations.
- Joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility.
- Linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured.
- Joint study programmes should have a European dimension, whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum.

Students. Students have a role as one of the main actors in higher education institutions and will use their power to choose courses of their own preference.

The social dimension should be taken into account by the member states and the students' social conditions should be guaranteed. Foreign students should have the same benefits as regular, national students.

Funding. Additional funding is needed to develop joint study programmes. Member states are encouraged to ensure that students following a joint study programme in a foreign country can transfer their national study allowances abroad.

The ERASMUS programme should be drawn upon.

Labour market. Education is an important factor for mobility on the labour market. Consultation with the social partners could be considered when establishing joint degrees.

Monitoring of the system of joint degrees should be included in the course of the Bologna-Prague-Berlin process up to 2003.

In order to facilitate an exchange of information and experience on the development of joint degrees the member states are kindly invited to report to the Bologna Follow-up Group at regular intervals on the joint degrees their higher education institutions are taking part in.

6.3.2. "Integrated Curricula: Implications and Prospects"

Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research, Italy; Mantova, Italy, 11-12 April 2002

Final Report[36]

4. 2. Recommendations to the education ministers meeting in Berlin

Legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees should be removed in all countries.

Additional funds should be provided to cover the higher costs of joint degree programmes, keeping in mind particularly the need to create equal opportunities for student participation. Besides national and regional governments, which will normally bear the costs, HE institutions - in the framework of their autonomy -, international bodies and other actors should be invited to provide special support for these programmes.

Involvement of institutions in joint degree programmes should be encouraged and supported in all Bologna signatory countries, particularly in those which are not yet participating actively.

Public awareness of the high value of joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula, in terms of European identity, citizenship and employability, should be increased, also by guaranteeing adequate visibility to existing examples of good practice.

4. 3. Recommendations to HE institutions

The development of European joint degree programmes should be based on the criteria identified in the Stockholm conclusions. Moreover, a clear distinction should be made between joint and double degree programmes, in terms of their curricular objectives and organizational models, also with a view to protecting the learners/users. A complete glossary of terms should be drawn.

Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula should be developed to address identified needs of European and global society that cannot be adequately addressed through national programmes, both in educating new professional figures and identifying new research areas.

Students, graduates, employers and other relevant actors should be consulted about the areas in which the implementation of joint degree programmes would be most appropriate. However, it is recommended that HE institutions use to full potential their role as proactive planners for long range societal needs. Students should also be involved in planning and evaluation activities.

Institutions that develop joint programmes should fully integrate and support them as a core function of their mission.

Partners for a joint degree programme should be chosen on the basis of shared mission and commitment, as well as their capacity to develop and sustain such a programme in academic, organizational and financial terms. Thematic networks could provide experience for identifying suitable partners in any European country.

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[36] Integral text of recommendations; only introductory part of the report eliminated. - Rapporteur: Prof. Giancarlo Spinelli, Politecnico di Milano.

Full consensus should be reached with partners regarding the model and the methodology to be used, as well as the elements of innovation and academic interest.

Learning outcomes and competencies, as well as student workload described in ECTS credits, should be viewed as crucial elements in constructing any joint programme.

Adequate quality assurance procedures should be jointly developed and activated by partners in a joint programme, and made explicit to learners/users.

Proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning should be ensured all through joint degree programmes. These programmes should also promote European identity, citizenship and employability.

May 12, 2003

6.4. Degree and Qualification Structures

6.4.1. "Master-Level Degrees"

Ministry of Education, Finland; Helsinki, Finland, 14-15 March 2003

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference[37]

Framework of reference for master degrees in Europe

There are various European initiatives underway today that aim at defining learning outcomes and skills and competencies both at the bachelor and master level. This will allow capitalising on the richness of European higher education traditions and creating European profiles in the various disciplines. At the same time, the promotion of mobility in Europe requires increased transparency and comparability of European higher education qualifications. Some common criteria for the structural definition of master's degrees - in their various national names - are needed. This framework of reference should be flexible enough to allow national and institutional variations, but at the same time clear enough to serve as a definition.

The following recommendations adopted by the participants in the conference could be seen as useful common denominators for a master degree in the EHEA:

1. A master degree is a second-cycle higher education qualification. The entry to a master's programme usually requires a completed bachelor degree at a recognised higher education institution. Bachelor and master degrees should have different defined outcomes and should be awarded at different levels.

2. Students awarded a master degree must have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding, or high level in artistic competence when appropriate, which allows them to integrate knowledge, and handle complexity, formulate judgements and communicate their conclusions to an expert and to a non-expert audience.

Students with a master degree will have the learning skills needed to pursue further studies or research in a largely self-directed, autonomous manner.

3. All bachelor degrees should open access to master studies and all master degrees should give access to doctoral studies. A transition from master level to doctoral studies without the formal award of a master's degree should be considered possible if the student demonstrates that he/she has the necessary abilities.

Differences in orientation or profile of programmes should not affect the civil effect of the master degrees.

4. Bachelor and master programmes should be described on the basis of content, quality and learning outcomes, not only according to the duration of programmes or other formal characteristics.

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[37] Integral text of recommendations; only introductory part of the report excluded. - Ministry of Education and Science; Helsinki, Finland.

5. There are several ongoing international projects related to developing coherent quality assurance mechanisms in the EHEA. This work should be continued, and international aspects of national and regional quality assurance systems should be further developed.

6. Joint master programmes at the European level should be developed to promote intra-European co-operation and attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention must be paid to solving recognition problems related to joint degrees.

7. While master degree programmes normally carry 90 - 120 ECTS credits, the minimum requirements should amount to 60 ECTS credits at master level. As the length and the content of bachelor degrees vary, there is a need to have similar flexibility at the master level. Credits awarded should be of the appropriate profile.

8. In certain fields, there may continue to exist integrated one-tier programmes leading to master degrees. Yet, opportunities for access to intermediate qualifications and transfer to other programmes should be encouraged.

9. Programmes leading to a master degree may have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. Master degrees can be taken at universities and in some countries, in other higher education institutions.

10. In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile of a given qualification is explained in the Diploma Supplement issued to the student.

6.4.2. "Qualification Structures in Higher Education in Europe"

Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Denmark; København, Denmark, 27-28 March 2003

Recommendations[38]

The participants in the conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education, organizæd by the Danish authorities in Copenhagen on March 27 – 28, 2003 recommend:

1. The Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 should encourage the competent public authorities responsible for higher education to elaborate national qualifications frameworks for their respective higher education systems with due consideration to the qualifications framework to be elaborated for the European Higher Education Area.

2. The Ministers' meeting should also be invited to launch work on an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, with a view to providing a structural framework against which individual national frameworks could articulate with due regard to the institutional, historical and national context.

3. At each appropriate level, qualifications frameworks should seek to describe the qualifications making up the framework in terms of workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profile. An EHEA framework should seek to describe qualifications in generic terms (e.g. as first or second cycle degrees) rather than in terms specific to one or more national systems (e.g. Bachelor or Master)

4. Qualifications frameworks should also seek to describe these qualifications with reference to the objectives or purposes for higher education, in particular with regard to four major purposes of higher education:

(i) preparation for the labour market;
(ii) preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society;
(iii) personal development;
(iv) development and maintenance an advanced knowledge base.

5. While at national level, qualifications frameworks should as far as possible encompass qualifications at all levels, it is recommended that, at least as a first step, a framework for the European Higher Education Area focus on higher education qualifications as well as on all qualifications giving access to higher education. As far as possible, an EHEA framework should also include qualifications below first-degree level.

6. Within the overall rules of the qualifications frameworks, individual institutions should have considerable freedom in the design of their programs. National qualifications frameworks, as well as an EHEA framework, should be designed so as to assist higher education institutions in their curriculum development and design of study programs. Qualifications frameworks should facilitate the inclusion of interdisciplinary higher education study programs.

7. Quality assurance agencies should take the aims of the qualifications frameworks into account in their assessment of higher education institutions and/or programs and make the extent to which

[38] Integral text. - Rapporteur: Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe.

institutions and/or programs implement and meet the goals of the qualifications framework of the country concerned, as well as an EHEA framework, an important element in the overall outcome of the assessment exercise. Higher education institutions should also take account of the qualifications frameworks in their internal quality assurance processes. At the same time, the qualifications frameworks should define their quality goals in such a way as to be of relevance to quality assessment.

8. While an EHEA qualifications framework should considerably simplify the process of recognition of qualifications within the Area, such recognition should still follow the provisions of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention. The Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 should therefore invite all states party to the Bologna Process to ratify this Convention as soon as possible.

9. The main stakeholders in higher education within the EHEA should be invited to contribute to a dialogue on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area as well as give consideration to how such a framework could simplify the process of recognition of qualifications within the framework. Considerations of national frameworks could benefit from taking into account experience with other frameworks.

10. Transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS should be reviewed to make sure that the information provided is clearly related to the EHEA framework.

11. Whether at national level or at the level of the European Higher Education Area, qualifications frameworks should make provision for the inclusion of joint degrees and other forms of combination of credits earned at the home institution and other institutions as well as credits earned through other relevant programs or experiences.

12. Qualifications frameworks, at national level as well as at the level of the European Higher Education Area, should assist transparency and should assist the continuous improvement and development of higher education in Europe.

6.5. Social Dimensions of the Bologna Process

6.5.1. "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area"

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece; Athinai, Greece, 19-20 February 2003

Conclusions[39]

A. The issues of the "social dimension" and the "public good"

In the Berlin Communiqué, the Ministers should explicitly reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process towards the construction of the European Higher Education Area. They should also reaffirm their position that higher education should be considered a public good and a public responsibility. Moreover, the Ministers should specify the social aspects of the European Higher Education Area, taking also stock of the outcomes of the official Bologna Seminar held in Athens and of the European Student Convention.

Improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area should counterbalance the need for competitiveness and be seen as a value in itself as well as one of the conditions of competitiveness, and should aim at reducing the social gap and strengthening social cohesion, both at national and at European level. In the knowledge-based society and economy, the social component should be given considerable concern with regards to research as well.

Higher education as a public good cannot only be interpreted as an economic issue but also as a social and political one. In that context, higher education should be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction and the defence of free education.

Under conditions of wide access to higher education, the need for quality and accountability becomes predominant, and should be realised through the establishment of appropriate quality assurance procedures. At the same time, the maintenance of public support on the one hand and the efficient use of the available resources on the other are of special importance as well.

Appropriate studying and living conditions should be ensured for the students so that they can finalise successfully their studies in time without being prevented by obstacles related to their social and economic background. In this context, it is necessary to introduce and maintain social support schemes for the students, including grants, portable as far as possible, loan schemes, health care and insurance, housing and academic and social counselling.

Removing the obstacles to the free movement of students should be considered a prerequisite for provision of equal mobility opportunities to all students irrespective of their social and economic background, thus providing for a genuine mobility.

Participants underlined the need for on-going research at European level, including comparative analyses and best practices, so that the social dimension of the Bologna Process and the consideration of higher education as public good and public responsibility to be further improved.

B. The issue of the GATS negotiations

[39] Integral text. - Rapporteur: Stephan Neetens, ESIB.

Participants took notice of the emerging global market for higher education services as well as developments in trading these services in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Participants also noted the increasing trend towards global competition in higher education. However, they reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world.

Participants welcomed the announcement of the European Commission not to include education in its negotiation proposal for the ongoing GATS negotiations as a positive development. The majority also welcomed the efforts of keeping the existing commitments of the EU limited entirely to for-profit privately funded education services.

Participants reaffirmed the commitment of the Prague Communiqué for considering higher education a public good and stressed that any negotiations about trade in education services must not jeopardise the responsibility of financing the public education sector. They further stressed, that recognition agreements and the right of countries to implement quality assurance mechanisms should not be put in question.

Generally, participants believe that the positions to develop future and maintain existing regulatory and funding frameworks on national and international level have to be guaranteed.

Participants also believe that it is necessary to continue to develop alternative frameworks for internationalisation within the Bologna Process and the international context based on academic co-operation, trust and respect for diversity.

Furthermore, it is necessary in each country to assess the possible impacts of GATS on education systems from a legal and practical perspective, also taking into account the role of higher education in society.

Participants expressed the need for transparency in the GATS negotiations and that GATS negotiators should consult closely the higher education stakeholders.

Participants stressed that in case of the necessity of dispute settlement under GATS procedures, experts from the higher education sector should be consulted.

It is asked from the Bologna Follow-Up Group to elaborate a text proposal on European higher education and GATS for inclusion in the Berlin Communiqué by the next meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group in June 2003.

6.5.2. "Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education"

Royal Ministry of Education and Research, Norway; Oslo, Norway, 12-14 June 2003

1 – Summary[40]

In the Prague Ministerial Summit student involvement was identified as one of the important topics for the future discussions within the Bologna Process and the call for a follow-up seminar on the topic was eagerly taken by the Norwegian Ministry. This is the reason why more than 100 representatives from the Ministries, institutions, European organisations and student organisations gathered between the 12th and the 14th of June 2003 in Oslo in a seminar hosted by the Norwegian Royal Ministry for Education and Research and where ESIB, the Norwegian national unions of students (NSU and STL) and the Council of Europe were valuable co-organisers.

The seminar's main theme was the role of student participation in institutional national and international processes of governance in higher education. There was a focus, from various perspectives on how legislation may include and regulate student's participation in governance of higher education institutions and on the students' participation in the academic life. The Seminar consisted of a series of panel interventions, case studies presentations and 4 workshops.

A survey about student participation was carried out and later on used as the fundamental background information for the success of this seminar. The report was commissioned from the Council of Europe by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The survey focused on the issue of student participation in the *governance* of higher education. The survey shows that there is a wide and positive attitude towards increased student influence in higher education governance.

During the first two days of this seminar, students, institutions and ministries had the opportunity to present their national practices concerning student participation. This was an effective way to means test the previously known results of the survey on student participation.

The participants were generally critical of the fact that some levels of decision making are still not fully available to students and that sometimes the formal involvement is not a guarantee of actual participation as equal partners and members of the higher education community.

The workshops discussed the role of students being partners or Consumers; the impact of internationalisation on student participation, the degree of involvement of students in Higher Education governance and how they can be motivated to participation and also the support of the international community for student participation.

2 - Seminar Conclusions

1 - Further involvement of students is needed at all levels of decision making, this involvement should not only be legally permitted but effectively encouraged by providing the means necessary for active participation both in the formal and informal approaches.

2 - This encouragement could include mechanisms of recognition and certification of the experience and of the competences and skills acquired by being a student representative. It should also require effective involvement of other stakeholders in the motivation towards not only becoming a student representative but also towards participation in elections and on the decision making process

[40] Integral text. - Rapporteur: Paulo Fontes, ESIB.

3 - Further involvement brings further responsibilities and demands. Mechanisms of assuring accountability, transparency and the flow on information to other students should be prioritized.

4 – There is an ethical obligation to hand over the knowledge acquired so that an effective student representation exists independently of the rotation of individual student representatives.

5 - Usually the higher the level of representation the higher the demand level also is. Students' Organizations should be supported on obtaining the financial, logistical and human resources necessary for creating a situation of equality in participation. Informed and motivated students are often the driving force behind beneficial reforms instead of being the grain of sand in the clock work.

6 - Universities that assure student participation and student organisations that organise this participation must definitely be seen as schools of citizenship and agents of development of society not only at the local level but also within an international responsibility of solidarity and co-operation. With an effective work on this level it will be society that will emulate the Higher Educations Institutions environment and not the other way around. Having this in mind students cannot be considered simply consumers or clients.

6.6. Lifelong Learning

6.6.1. "Recognition and Credit Validation of Education Acquired in Non-Higher Education Contexts, Including Lifelong Learning, for Further Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Studies"

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Czech Republic; Praha, Czech Republic, 5-7 June 2003

Recommendations[41]

To higher education institutions and others

Higher education institutions and others should:
- reconfirm their historical commitment to, and reconsider their approach and relationship to, lifelong learning, bring learning closer to the learner and interact more with local communities and enterprises;
- adopt internal policies to promote the recognition of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning for access and study exemption;
- reconsider skills content in courses and the nature of their study programs;
- use the Diploma Supplement, ECTS credits and skills portfolios to record learning as well as to facilitate individual learning paths;
- express all qualifications in terms of explicit reference points: qualifications descriptors, level descriptors, learning outcomes, subject related and generic competencies;
- integrate lifelong learning into their overall strategy, global development plan and mission;
develop partnerships with other stakeholders.

To public authorities responsible for higher education

Public authorities responsible for higher education should:
- clarify and define their goals with regard to lifelong learning and develop appropriate implementation strategies;
- develop new style national qualifications frameworks that integrate forms of lifelong learning as possible paths leading to higher education qualifications, as well as access qualifications, within this qualifications framework;
- take appropriate measures to ensure equal access to and appropriate opportunities for success in lifelong learning to each individual in accordance with his/her aspirations and abilities;
- ensure the right to fair recognition of qualifications acquired in different learning environments;
- encourage higher education institutions to develop and implement lifelong learning policies and measures the measures and support them in their endeavours;
- apply appropriate methods for the evaluation and, where appropriate, accreditation of various forms of lifelong learning.

To international institutions and organizations

International institutions and organizations should:
- through the ENIC and NARIC Networks, seek to develop international good practice to promote the recognition of qualifications earned through lifelong learning paths, as far as possible using the provisions and principles of the Lisboa Recognition Convention;

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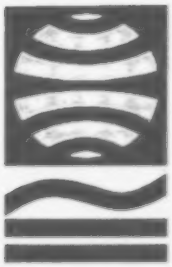
[41] Integral text. - Rapporteur: Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe.

- where appropriate and needed, develop international instruments to facilitate such recognition;
- bring together existing experience with national qualifications frameworks with a view to facilitating the development of further national frameworks as well as a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area that would encompass lifelong learning paths;
- support and develop projects furthering the integration of lifelong learning paths within qualifications frameworks, improved description of lifelong learning paths and improving the opportunity of learners to follow the paths thus established;
- stimulate networks working in this area.

To the Berlin Higher Education Summit

The Ministers of the Bologna Process, meeting for the Berlin Higher Education Summit on September 18 – 19, 2003 may be invited to:
- launch work involving all appropriate stakeholders on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area encompassing the wide range of lifelong learning paths, opportunities and techniques and making appropriate use of the ECTS credits. In entrusting the Bologna Follow Up Group with the organization of this endeavour, they should encourage co-operation between the development of this framework and the work of the Brugge-København Process in vocational education and training;
- underline the importance of improving the possibilities of all citizens to follow the lifelong learning paths established within qualifications frameworks in accordance with their aspirations and abilities and entrust the Bologna Follow Up Group, in time for the 2005 Ministerial Conference, with exploring how this goal may be achieved.



European Commission
Directorate-General
for Education and Culture

Trends 2003
Progress toward the European Higher Education Area

By Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch

Summary

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Executive Summary

Aims of the study

This study aims to capture the most important recent trends related to the Bologna reforms. It is a follow-up to the two Trends reports which were written for the Bologna Conference in 1999 and the Prague Conference in 2001. Unlike the two first reports, which were mainly based on information provided by the Ministries of Higher Education and the Rectors' Conferences, Trends 2003 tries to reflect not only these two perspectives but also those of students, employers and, most importantly, the HEIs themselves, thus giving a fairly comprehensive picture of the present phase of the Bologna Process. If the EHEA is to become a reality, it has to evolve from governmental intentions and legislation to institutional structures and processes, able to provide for the intense exchange and mutual cooperation necessary for such a cohesive area. This means that higher education institutions are heavily and directly involved in the development of viable interpretations of concepts which were and are sometimes still vague, even in the minds of those who use these concepts most often. Concrete meaning needs to be given to:

- the term "employability" in the context of study programmes at Bachelor level;
- the relation between the new two tiers;
- workload-based credits as units to be accumulated within a given programme;
- curricular design that takes into account qualification descriptors, level descriptors, skills and learning outcomes;
- the idea of flexible access and individualised learning paths for an increasingly diverse student body;
- the role of Higher Education inserting itself into a perspective of lifelong learning;
- the conditions needed to optimise access to mobility; and last but not least, to
- meaningful internal and external quality assurance procedures.

We may thus assert from the outset that this study emphasises the need for complementarity between the top-down approach applied so far in the Bologna Process, with the emerging bottom-up process in which higher education institutions are already playing and should continue to play a key role - as expected of them by the ministers when they first met in Bologna. Institutional developments in line with the objectives of the Bologna Process are not only emerging rapidly, but also represent challenges worthy of our full attention, as this study hopes to prove.

Awareness and support of the Bologna Process

Awareness of the Bologna Process has increased considerably during the last two years. Nevertheless, the results of the Trends 2003 survey and many other sources suggest that, despite this growing awareness among the different HE groups, the reforms have yet to reach the majority of the HE grass-roots representatives who are supposed to implement them and give them concrete meaning. Deliberations on the implementation of Bologna reforms currently involve heads of institutions more than the academics themselves. Hence, interpreting Bologna in the light of its goals and the whole context of its objectives at departmental level, i.e. rethinking current teaching structures, units, methods, evaluation and the permeability between disciplines and institutions, is a task that still lies ahead for a majority of academics at European universities. Administrative staff and students seem so far to be even less included in deliberations on the implementation of Bologna reforms. Generally, awareness is more developed at universities than at other higher education institutions. In Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Germany, Ireland and most strongly the UK, deliberations on institutional Bologna reforms are even less widespread than in the other Bologna signatory countries. This does not mean, of course, that no reforms are being undertaken, but that if there are reforms they are not explicitly associated with the Bologna Process. In the case of Sweden, for instance, reforms along the lines of the Bologna Process are often not carried out in the name of Bologna.

In the light of the scope of the Bologna reforms, which involve not only all disciplines but different groups of actors in the whole institution, it should be noted that only 47% of universities and only 29,5% of other HEIs have created the position of a Bologna coordinator.

There is however **widespread support for the Bologna Process among heads of HEIs.** More than two thirds of the heads of institutions regard it as essential to make rapid progress towards the EHEA, another 20% support the idea of the EHEA but think the time is not yet ripe for it. However, some resistance to individual aspects and the pace of the reforms obviously remains. Such resistance seems to be more pronounced in Norway, France, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Ireland and the UK. Though some South East European (SEE) countries have not yet formally joined the Bologna Process, they already take it as a reference framework and actively promote its objectives.

The role of HEI in the Bologna Process

While being mostly supportive of the Bologna process, 62 % of university rectors and 57% of heads of other HEIs in Europe feel that institutions should be involved more directly in the realisation of the Bologna objectives.

Moreover, 46% of HEI leaders find that their national legislation undermines autonomous decision-making - at least in part. Particularly in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany,

Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and SEE, higher education representatives and rectors' conferences point to the limits of autonomous decision-making by institutions.

While many governments have made considerable progress with respect to the creation of legal frameworks which allow HEIs to implement Bologna reforms, only half of them seem to have provided some funding to the HEIs for these reforms. **The lack of financial support for the Bologna reforms is highlighted by nearly half of all HEIs of the Bologna signatory countries**. This means that the Bologna reforms are often implemented at the cost of other core functions or essential improvements. 75% of all heads of HEIs think clear financial incentives for involvement in the Bologna reforms should be provided. Obviously, the dialogue between rectors and academics, institutions and ministry representatives has to be intensified, beyond the reform of legislation, including both the implications of Bologna reforms at institutional level and the State support needed to foster these reforms, without detriment to other core functions of higher education provision.

The role of students in the Bologna Process

At 63% of universities in Bologna signatory countries, students have been formally involved in the Bologna Process, through participation in the senate or council or at faculty/departmental level. The same trend is valid for the non-signatory countries in SEE.

A significantly lower degree of formal participation in the Bologna Process at institutional level can be noted in Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, Iceland and the UK. Half of the students, as represented by their national and European student associations, feel they are playing a very or reasonably active role in the construction of the European Higher Education Area. At institutional and particularly at departmental level, the inclusion of students in the deliberations concerning a qualitative reform of teaching and learning structures, methods and evaluation in the spirit of the Bologna declaration still leaves considerable room for improvement.

Student representatives express the highest hopes concerning the principles of the Bologna reforms **and the harshest criticism** concerning their implementation and frequently reductive interpretations. The students' contribution to the deliberations on the Bologna reforms has been particularly strong on issues of the social dimension of Higher Education and the emphasis of HE as a public good, and in connection with discussions of the possible consequences of GATS on Higher Education Institutions. Students have also continuously stressed the values of student-centred learning, flexible learning paths and access, as well as a realistic, i.e. empirically-based, estimation of work load in the context of establishing institution-wide credit systems.

Academic quality and graduate employability as compatible aims

Enhancing academic quality and the employability of graduates are **the two most frequently mentioned driving forces behind the Bologna process** according to the representatives of ministries, rectors' conferences and higher education institutions.

A remarkable consensus has been reached at institutional level on the value of the employability of HE graduates in Europe: 91% of the heads of European higher education institutions regard the employability of their graduates to be an important or even very important concern when designing or restructuring their curricula. However, **regular and close involvement of professional associations and employers in curricular development still seems to be rather limited**. HEIs should be encouraged to seek a close dialogue with professional associations and employers in reforming their curricula. However, fears of short-sighted misunderstandings of the ways in which higher education should aim at employability and relevance to society and the economy have re-emerged frequently in the context of comparing and redesigning modules or degree structures. To do justice to the concerns of stakeholders regarding the relevance of higher education and the employability of HE graduates, without compromising the more long-term perspective proper to higher education institutions and to universities in particular, may well be the most decisive challenge and success-factor of Bologna-related curricular reforms. It should be noted that the growing trend towards structuring curricula in function of the learning outcomes and competences, is often seen as a way to ensure that academic quality and long-term employability become compatible goals of higher education. This understanding has also been the basis for the project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" in which more than 100 universities have tried to define a common core of learning outcomes in a variety of disciplines.

Promotion of mobility in Europe

While outgoing and incoming **student mobility has increased** across Europe, incoming mobility has grown more in the EU than in the accession countries. **A majority of institutions report an imbalance of outgoing over incoming students**. Net importers of students are most often located in France, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and, most strongly, in Ireland or the UK where 80% of the institutions report an imbalance of incoming over outgoing students.

Teaching staff mobility has increased over the last three years at a majority of higher education institutions in more than two thirds of the signatory countries.

Public funds for mobility have been increased in the majority of EU countries but only in a minority of accession countries. However, the number and level of mobility grants for

students is not sufficient to allow for equal access to mobility for those from financially less privileged backgrounds.

Comparable and European-wide data on all mobility (including free movers), including students' financial and social conditions, **is urgently needed** in order to allow monitoring of any progress in European mobility and benchmarking with other regions in the world.

Attractiveness of the EHEA and the national higher education systems

Enhancing the attractiveness of the European systems of Higher Education in the non-European world is **a third driving force of the Bologna Process**, ranked by Trends III respondents after improving academic quality and preparing graduates for a European labour market. **The EU is by far the highest priority area for most institutions** (mentioned by 92%). The second priority area is Eastern Europe (62%), followed by US/Canada (57%), Asia (40%), Latin America (32%), Africa and Australia (24% and 23%) and the Arab World (16%). In some European countries, the priorities diverge considerably from this ranking, notably in the UK, Spain, Germany and Romania where Europe is targeted significantly less often.

In order to promote their attractiveness in these priority areas, joint programmes or similar co-operation activities are clearly the preferred instrument (mentioned by three quarters of all HEIs). **Only 30% of HEIs mention the use of targeted marketing for recruiting students**, with the notable exceptions of Ireland and the UK where more than 80% of universities conduct targeted marketing.

A majority of countries have developed national brain drain prevention and brain gain promotion policies. Most HEIs still have to define their own institutional profiles more clearly in order to be able to target the markets which correspond to their priorities. In light of the competitive arena of international student recruitment, HEIs will not be able to avoid targeted marketing techniques if they want to position themselves internationally, even if such efforts may go against the grain of established academic culture and habits.

Higher Education as a public good

A large consensus appears to exist in the emerging EHEA regarding **Higher Education as a public good and a public responsibility**. It is widely recognised that social and financial support schemes, including portable grants and loans, and improved academic and social counselling are conditions for wider access to higher education, more student mobility and improved graduation rates.

However, the conflict between cooperation and solidarity, on the one hand, and competition and concentration of excellence, on the other, is currently growing as HEIs are faced with

decreasing funds. Higher education institutions can try to combine widened access, diversified provision and concentration of excellence, but often have to pursue one option to the detriment of the others. In competing with other policy areas for public funding, HEIs still have to convince parliaments and governments of the vital contribution of HE graduates and HE-based research to social and economic welfare.

Higher Education in the GATS

Only one third of the Ministries have developed a policy on the position of **Higher Education in the World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)**, while two thirds have not. The situation is similar for the Rectors' Conferences. Only 20% of HEI leaders declared themselves to be *fully aware* of the GATS negotiations, almost half of these leaders considered themselves to *be aware without having specific details*, and 29% said they were *not yet aware* of GATS, with considerable differences between countries.

Students' associations seem to be well aware of GATS and the threats posed by the further inclusion of HE in the on-going negotiations. There is a consensus that more transparency and consultation of higher education representatives is needed in the ongoing and future GATS negotiations.

To meet the internationalisation challenges, there is a growing need for enhanced quality assurance procedures and regulatory frameworks, also given the emergence of many private for-profit institutions in Europe.

Degree structures, qualification frameworks and curricula

Regarding the introduction of study structures based on undergraduate and graduate tiers, important progress has been made in legal terms. Today, **80% of the Bologna countries either have the legal possibility to offer two-tier structures or are introducing these**. Many governments have fixed deadlines for the transition from the traditional to the new degree system. In the remaining 20% of countries, the necessary legislative changes are being prepared. The latter holds true also for SEE countries.

As for the HEIs, 53% have introduced or are introducing the two-tier structure while 36% are planning it. In other words, **almost 90% of HEIs in the Bologna countries have or will have a two-tier structure**. Only 11% of HEIs see no need for curricular reform in this process. About 55% of HEIs in SEE have not yet introduced the two-tier structure.

The need for more structured doctoral studies in Europe has been highlighted repeatedly in recent years. The traditional procedure of leaving doctoral students largely on their own and

providing them with individual supervision only is no longer suited to the challenges of modern society and hampers the realisation of the European Higher Education Area.

Europe is divided in two halves regarding the organisation of these third-tier doctoral studies. In half of the countries, doctoral students receive mainly individual supervision and tutoring, while in the other half, taught doctoral courses are also offered in addition to individual work. HEIs still face the challenge of how to cooperate, with the support of governments, at doctoral level nationally and across Europe, and whether or not this should involve **the setting-up of structured doctoral studies, particularly in interdisciplinary and international settings.**

Student support for the new degree structures clearly outweighs the reservations, but the risk of putting too much emphasis on "employability" still causes unease among a substantial number of student associations.

In countries where first degrees at Bachelor level have not existed in the past, there still appears to be a tendency to see these as a stepping stone or orientation platform, rather than as degrees in their own right. The perception of Bachelor degrees as valid and acceptable qualifications still leaves room for improvement.

Governments and HEIs will have to cooperate closely to **ensure that the implementation of the new degree structures is not done superficially,** but is accompanied by the necessary curricular review, taking into account not only the ongoing European discussions on descriptors for Bachelor-level and Master-level degrees, learning outcomes and qualification profiles, but also institution-specific needs for curricular reform.

To achieve the objective of a "system of easily readable and comparable degrees" within the European Higher Education Area, it will be essential that governments and HEIS use the next phase of the Bologna Process to **elaborate qualifications frameworks based on external reference points (qualification descriptors, level descriptors, skills and learning outcomes), possibly in tune with a common European Qualifications Framework.** The outcomes of the Joint Quality Initiative and the Tuning project may be relevant in this respect.

Joint Curricula and Joint Degrees

Joint Curricula and Joint Degrees are intrinsically linked to all the objectives of the Bologna Process and have the potential to become an important element of a truly European Higher Education Area. Nevertheless, and in spite of the appeal in the Prague Communiqué, Joint Curricula and Joint Degrees still do not receive sufficient attention, as is confirmed by the fact that most Ministries and Rectors' Conferences attach only medium or even low importance to these. More than two thirds of the Ministries claim to give some kind of financial incentive to the development of Joint Curricula/Joint Degrees but the extent of such support is not known.

While support for Joint Curricula and Joint Degrees is clearly higher among HEIs and students, these have not yet been recognised as core tools for institutional development. Their

creation and coordination still appears to be left entirely to the initiative of individual professors.

HEIs and national higher education systems in the EHEA would lose an enormous opportunity to position themselves internationally if they were not to focus their attention more than before on systematic – including financial - support for the development of Joint Curricula/Joint Degrees.

Of course, such support would entail amendments and changes in the existing higher education legislation of many countries, as **in more than half of the Bologna Process countries, the legislation does not yet allow the awarding of Joint Degrees**. It would also call for the elaboration of agreed guidelines and definitions for Joint Curricula/Joint Degrees, both at national and European level, and would rely on enhanced networking between the HEIs themselves.

Recognition

About **two thirds of the Bologna signatory countries have so far ratified the most important legal tool for recognition, the Lisbon Recognition Convention**. The European Higher Education Area would benefit if this Convention were ratified by *all* Bologna signatory states as soon as possible.

Correspondingly, more than half of the academic staff are reported as being *not very aware* or *not aware at all* of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention. *Close cooperation* with the relevant ENIC/NARIC is reported by only 20% of HEIs, while 25% don't cooperate at all with their ENIC/NARIC. A further 28% of HEIs say they do not know what ENIC/NARIC is (or at least not under this name).

Thus **awareness of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention, but also of the ENIC/NARIC initiatives (recognition procedures in transnational education etc.) among academic staff and students needs to be raised,** through cooperation between international organisations, national authorities and HEIs. Moreover, the position of the ENIC/NARIC also needs to be strengthened in some countries.

Two thirds of the Ministries, more than half of the HEIs and slightly less than 50% of the student associations expect that the Bologna Process will greatly facilitate academic recognition procedures. While HEIs are rather optimistic with regard to the smoothness of recognition procedures of study abroad periods, in many countries, however, institution-wide procedures for recognition seem to be quite under-developed, and the recognition of study abroad periods often takes place on a case-by-case basis. Even where formal procedures exist, students, as the primarily concerned group, often say they are unaware of these. Almost 90% of the students' associations reported that their members occasionally or often encounter recognition problems when they return from study abroad.

It is a positive sign that more than 40% of the students' associations indicated that appeal procedures for recognition problems were also in place in their members' institutions. But, clearly, more HEIs should be encouraged to **develop more and better institutional recognition procedures, and especially to intensify communication with students** on these matters.

The **Diploma Supplement** is being introduced in a growing number of countries, but the main target group - the employers - is still insufficiently aware of it. Awareness of the potential benefits of the Diploma Supplement therefore also needs to be raised. The introduction of a *Diploma Supplement label* (like that of an *ECTS label*) would probably lead to a clear qualitative improvement in the use of the Diploma Supplement.

Credits for transfer and accumulation

ECTS is clearly emerging as *the* European credit system. In many countries it has become a legal requirement, while other countries with national credit systems are ensuring their compatibility with ECTS.

Two thirds of HEIs today use ECTS for *credit transfer*, 15% use a different system. Regarding *credit accumulation*, almost three quarters of HEIs declare that they have already introduced it – this surprisingly high figure needs further examination and may result from an insufficient understanding of the particularities of a credit accumulation system.

The ECTS information campaign of the past years, undertaken by the European Commission, the European University Association and many national organisations, has yet to reach a majority of institutions where the use of **ECTS is still not integrated into institution-wide policies or guidelines,** and its principles and tools are often insufficiently understood

The basic principles and tools of ECTS, as laid down in the **"ECTS Key Features" document**, need to be conveyed to academic and administrative staff and students alike in order to exploit the potential of ECTS as a tool for transparency. Support and advice is particularly needed regarding credit allocation related to learning outcomes, workload definition, and the use of ECTS for *credit accumulation*. The introduction of the ECTS label will lead to a clear qualitative improvement in the use of ECTS.

Autonomy and Quality Assurance

Increasing autonomy normally means greater independence from state intervention, but **is generally accompanied by a growing influence of other stakeholders in society, as well as by extended external quality assurance procedures and outcome-based funding** mechanisms. However, many higher education representatives stress that a release of higher education institutions from state intervention will only increase institutional autonomy and

optimise the universities' innovative potential, as long as this is not undone by mechanistic and uniform *ex post* monitoring of outputs, or by an overly intrusive influence of other stakeholders with more short-term perspectives.

All Bologna signatory countries have established or are in the process of establishing agencies which are responsible for external quality control in some form or another. 80% of HEIs in Europe already undergo external quality assurance procedures in some form or another (quality evaluation or accreditation). The **previous opposition between accreditation procedures in the accession countries and quality evaluation in EU countries seems to be softening**: A growing interest in accreditation and the use of criteria and standards can be observed in Western Europe, while an increasing use of improvement-oriented evaluation procedures is noted in Eastern European countries. Two recent comparative studies also observe a softening of opposition between institution- and programme-based approaches among QA agencies and an increasing mix of these two approaches within the same agencies.

The **primary function of external quality assurance** (quality evaluation or accreditation), according to the responsible agencies and the majority of HEIs, consists in **quality improvement**. Only in France, Slovakia and the UK, accountability to society is mentioned more frequently than quality improvement. Even accreditation agencies, traditionally more oriented toward accountability, have stressed improvement in recent years. Generally speaking, external quality procedures are evaluated positively by the HEIs. Most frequently, they are regarded as enhancing institutional quality culture. Higher education representatives, however, often observe that the effectiveness of the quality evaluation procedures will depend to a large extent on their readiness to consider the links between teaching and research and other dimensions of institutional management. As complex systems, universities cannot react to a problem seen in one domain without also affecting other domains indirectly. Likewise, the efficiency and return on investment in quality review processes will depend on the synergies and coordination between the various national and European accountability and quality assurance procedures, as well as the funding mechanisms in place across Europe.

Internal quality assurance procedures seem to be just as widespread as external ones and mostly focus on teaching. 82% of the heads of HEIs reported that they have internal procedures to monitor the quality of teaching, 53% also have internal procedures to monitor the quality of research. Only a quarter of the HEIs say they have procedures to monitor aspects other than teaching and research. At the moment, however, internal procedures are not yet developed and robust enough to make external quality assurance superflous.

Ministries, rectors' conferences, HEIs, and students all generally **prefer mutual recognition of national quality assurance procedures over common European structures**. However, the objects and beneficiaries (or "victims") of quality evaluation and accreditation, the higher education institutions themselves, are significantly more positively disposed toward common structures and procedures than the national actors. For instance, nearly half of higher education institutions say they would welcome a pan-European accreditation agency.

The ultimate challenge for QA in Europe consists in creating transparency, exchange of good practice and enough common criteria to allow for mutual recognition of each others' procedures, without mainstreaming the system and undermining its positive forces of diversity and competition.

Lifelong learning

Definitions of Lifelong Learning (LLL) and its relation to Continuing Education (CE) and Adult Education are still vague and diverse in different national contexts. Generally speaking, as far as the HE sector is concerned, LLL debates constitute the follow-up to the older debates on Continuing Education and Adult Education, sharing their focus on flexible access to the courses provided, as well as the attempt to respond to the diverse profiles and backgrounds of students. All of the recent definitions of LLL reflect an emphasis on identifying how learning can best be enabled, in all contexts and phases of life.

The need for national LLL policies seems to be undisputed, and was strongly pushed in the context of the consultation on the European Commission's Memorandum on LLL (November 2000). The Trends 2003 survey reveals that in 2003 the majority of countries either intend or are in the process of developing a LLL strategy. Such policies already exist in one third of Bologna signatory countries, namely in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK.

Most of the policies and actions undertaken at European and national levels do not target the higher education sector as such, and do not address the particular added value or conditions of LLL provision at HEIs.

At institutional level, the UK, Iceland, France, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Bulgaria have the highest percentages of higher education institutions with LLL strategies, while Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Turkey, Romania and other SEE countries have the lowest percentages.

A majority of student associations have observed changes in attitude to LLL over the last three years at institutions in their countries. Nearly half of the student representatives noted changes with respect to the courses offered to non-traditional students, while a third observed greater encouragement of LLL culture among students. Little change was observed with respect to teaching methodologies or access policies.

Most national LLL policies comprise two co-existing agenda of social inclusion, stressing flexible access and diversity of criteria for different learner profiles, and economic competitiveness, focusing on efficient up-dating of professional knowledge and skills. The latter dimension is often funded and developed in partnership with labour market stakeholders. If the competitiveness agenda is reinforced by tight national budgets and not

counterbalanced by government incentives, university provision of LLL may well be forced to let go of the more costly social agenda.

The development of LLL provision reflects a clear market orientation and a well-developed dialogue with stakeholders. Two thirds of the European institutions provide assistance on request and respond to the expressed needs of businesses, professional associations and other employers. Nearly half (49%) actually initiate joint programmes, with considerably more institutions doing so in Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, France, Ireland and the UK. However, the inclination to respond directly to market needs is also one of the reasons for the critical attitude of many academics toward LLL units at higher education institutions, especially at universities.

European reforms of degree structures seem to affect LLL at many institutions. 39% of heads of institutions find that the implementation of new degree structures also affects the design of LLL programmes and modules.

With the exception of exchanging experience in major European networks of continuing education, European cooperation between institutions in LLL, e.g. for the sake of joint course development, is still the exception rather than the rule.

LLL provision is still generally marginalised, i.e. rarely integrated in the general strategies, core processes and decision-making of the institution. Even in those countries where CE or LLL has been playing an important political role and where incentives are provided to develop LLL, such as France, the UK and Finland, CE centers are not always recognised on an equal footing with the rest of university teaching and research. In order to position themselves in an expanding market and clarify the added value of their expertise, HEIs will have to make more of an effort to integrate LLL into their core development processes and policies.

Diversification of institutional profiles

Currently, a large majority of European higher education institutions are alike in the relative weight they attribute to teaching and research, and in the dominance of a national orientation regarding the community they primarily serve. Only 13% of all European HEIs (16% of universities) see themselves as serving a world-wide community (with large country divergences in this respect), while only 7% see themselves as primarily serving a European community.

Higher education institutions are facing an increasing need to develop more differentiated profiles, since the competition for public and private funds, as well as for students and staff, has increased in times of more intense internationalisation and even globalisation of parts of the Higher Education market. However, the readiness of HEIs to develop more differentiated profiles depends to a large extent on increased autonomy - which is only partially realised in

Europe, as well as on funding mechanisms which allow for such profiling, and which are not yet in place in any European country.

A major challenge for the future consists in addressing the new needs which arise from the diversified body of immediate partners in teaching and research. Universities will not only have to decide what the limits of these partners' roles should be, in order to maintain their own academic freedom, but will also have to sell the 'unique added value' of what the university's role and contribution to teaching and research can be, distinguishing themselves from other organisations which also offer teaching or research. Their learning structures and outcomes, with suitable supporting quality criteria, including their individual ways of relating academic quality to sustainable employability, will certainly become one of the prime ingredients of institutional positioning in Europe and the world.

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD SUSTAINABLE REFORMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE?

This study has looked at the Bologna Process from a predominantly institutional point of view. It has traced European and national trends pertaining to the overall Bologna goals and operational objectives, and has attempted to draw attention to implications, emerging consequences and possible interpretations of such developments at the level of higher education institutions. While concrete conclusions have already been drawn at the end of each individual section, we would like to emphasise four more fundamental conclusions which have emerged from the current phase of implementing the Bologna reforms at national and institutional levels, and which apply to any given ingredient of the reforms:

1. HOLISTIC BOLOGNA

Implementing the Bologna objectives becomes most fruitful if they are taken as a package and related to each other. Thus, for instance, the links between creating a Bachelor/Master degree structure, establishing an institution-wide credit transfer and accumulation system, and, less obvious to some, opening a lifelong learning perspective, have clearly emerged as points of synergy in the course of reflections on how to implement such reforms at institutional level. These links have crystallised around the issues of creating modular structures and defining qualification frameworks and profiles, as well as concrete learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, competences and skills. Other links were already clearly visible two years ago, such as the fact that creating compatible structures and improvement-oriented quality assurance would build trust and facilitate recognition, which in turn would facilitate mobility. In the course of devising viable academic solutions to some of the Bologna challenges, higher education representatives are now beginning to discover that, if given enough time, they may have embarked on more far-reaching and meaningful reforms than they had originally envisaged, enhancing attention to learners' needs as well as flexibility within and between degree programmes, institutions and national systems.

2. SYSTEMIC BOLOGNA

Implementing the Bologna objectives has far-reaching implications for the whole institution, not just in terms of reforming the teaching provision but also regarding counselling and other support services, infrastructure and, last but not least, university expenditure. Bologna

reforms are not "cost-neutral"; they imply initial investments as well as increased recurrent costs of provision which affect other core functions of the institutions if overall budgets do not increase in real terms. But the systemic integration of the Bologna reforms does not just assert itself in administrative, infrastructural and financial terms. It also becomes blatantly obvious in the establishment of the new Bachelor and Master degrees, in which the role of research may have to be redefined. Master degrees, of course, cannot be reformed without due regard to their links and interrelation with doctoral-level teaching and research. To state the obvious, teaching cannot and should not be reformed at universities without considering its interrelation with research, from creating opportunities of recruiting young researchers to the integration of research projects into teaching.

3. AMBIVALENT BOLOGNA

In practically all action lines of the Bologna reforms, two potentially conflicting agenda emerge:

On the one hand, there is the competitiveness agenda, which aims at bracing institutions and national systems for global competition, using transparent structures and cooperation with European partners in order to survive or even thrive in an increasingly tough competition for funds, students and researchers. According to this agenda, greater concentration of excellence and centres of competence, clearer emphases of strengths and harsher treatment of weaknesses are necessary, even urgent, if European higher education is to contribute to reaching the lofty goal of Europe becoming "the most competitive dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010 (Lisbon 2000).

On the other hand, there is the social agenda, stressing cooperation and solidarity between equal and unequal partners, flexible access, attention to individuals and individual contexts, including addressing issues such as the dangers of brain drain. It would be naïve to assume that the European Higher Education Area is being built only on the latter agenda.

Both agenda are needed to fuel the process. But they also have to be weighted, balanced and adapted to any given institutional context as well as interpreted in the light of each institution's attempts to find an appropriate niche in the national and European system of higher education. Well-meaning attempts to square the circle by trying to pursue both agenda, without any further differentiation regarding their application to different parts of each given system or institution, are bound to kill the fragile emerging institutional profiles which can be witnessed in a number of European countries. In any case, national legislators, policy-makers and institutional leaders must try to avoid the considerable danger of creating contradictory policies, incentives or measures if they want to succeed in either or both of these agenda. Instead, legislators and policy-makers should enlarge – and higher education institutions should use – the spaces for autonomous decision-making in order to allow for such differentiation.

4. FURTHERING BOLOGNA

So far, the Bologna Process has made considerable progress in achieving the objectives set out in 1999. This study proves once again that these objectives are realistic enough to inspire confidence in the developments leading to the European Higher Education Area. However, we should point to some neglected view-points and issues which seem to us to be essential for the creation of a genuine European Higher Education Area:

There seems to be a surprising lack of attention to the issue of facilitating a truly European-wide recruitment of professors. There are very few European higher education institutions which have a sizeable minority, let alone a majority, of non-national European academic staff. While this issue is addressed in the framework of the European Research Area, it belongs just as centrally to the creation of a European Higher Education Area and it should receive greater attention in the next phases of the Bologna Process. How can HEIs be encouraged to internationalise their recruitment procedures? What obstacles to long-term staff mobility must be overcome in terms of health insurance, pensions rights etc.?

Furthermore, the issue of free choice of study locations anywhere in Europe, even at undergraduate level at the very beginning of a study career, has not received attention. This is surprising, especially if one considers that the removal of all obstacles to such free choice would be the clearest evidence of a European Higher Education Area worthy of this name.
Linguistic matters are another neglected aspect of the EHEA: impressive progress is being made in terms of structural convergence, greater transparency, portability of grants etc., but many years of experience with EU mobility programmes have shown the effectiveness of language barriers. Is the total dominance of the English language in most institutions and programmes really the price we have to pay for true European mobility, or are there ways to safeguard Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity and convince students (and institutions) that "small languages" are worth bothering about?

Last but not least, if the enormous potential of using the Bologna objectives as a trigger for long-needed, fundamental and sustainable reforms of higher education in Europe is not to be wasted, the voice of the academics, within the institutions, will need to be heard and listened to more directly in the Bologna Process.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Education and Culture

Berlin Conference of European Higher Education Ministers

"Realising the European Higher Education Area"

Contribution of the European Commission

Berlin, 18/19 September 2003

Brussels, 30 July 2003

1. Introduction

The Bologna Declaration of June 1999 has put in motion a series of reforms needed to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for our own citizens and for citizens and scholars from other continents. In Prague, in May 2001, the Ministers took note of the progress so far and added three new Action lines. In Berlin the challenge will be to set priorities and define concrete targets in order to make sure that the European Higher Education Area becomes a reality.

The potential in Europe is enormous. Thousands of universities produce knowledge and transmit their knowledge to hundreds of thousands of graduates every year. Many universities, many individual departments are world class. Europe is the biggest single market in the world. But we do not use our potential to the full. There are still too many barriers to the mobility of students, teachers and researchers. Universities do not co-operate enough, the transmission of new knowledge to the world of enterprise is not sufficiently organised and funding is often inadequate or used inefficiently. Reforms are needed.

The Bologna process coincides with Commission policy in higher education over the years through the European co-operation programmes and notably Socrates-Erasmus. In Prague, this fact was acknowledged and the Commission was invited to become a full member of the Bologna follow-up structure, alongside the Signatory States.

The Commission supports most of the Bologna Action lines, e.g. through actions ranging from the Diploma Supplement label, promoting transparency of qualifications, to the launch of "Erasmus Mundus", fostering the attractiveness of European higher education on a global scale. All these measures, which are part of the overall EU approach to educational matters, and the - geographically wider - Bologna process are reinforcing each other, improving the chances of the genuine implementation of declared objectives across the various higher education systems. Such synergies are illustrated, for instance, by the impact of EU mobility actions on the call for more transparency and recognition of qualifications in Europe. The latter, in its turn, supports the EU's broader reform agenda under the Lisbon strategy.

In March 2000, EU Heads of State and Government in Lisbon decided on an objective and a strategy making Europe by 2010 *"the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*". In Barcelona, in March 2002, they added that the European education and training systems should become a "*world quality reference*".

The EU Education Ministers have translated this far-reaching ambition into a series of common objectives for the different education and training systems in Europe. Progress in reaching these objectives will be evaluated against "Reference Levels of European Average Performance" or "European Benchmarks". In November 2003, the Commission will present an Interim Report on the Lisbon Objectives to the EU Ministers of Education and Training, while reminding them of the commitments made in Bologna and Prague. On that occasion the Commission will also stress the link with the Copenhagen process, launched in December 2002, on enhanced European co-operation in Vocational Education and Training in important fields such as the transparency of qualifications, credit transfer and quality assurance.

The present paper describes in brief the contribution of the Commission to the Bologna reforms in the context of a broader ambition of strengthening the role of universities in the

Europe of Knowledge. It also suggests a few concrete steps forwards Ministers could decide upon in Berlin.

2. Strengthening the Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge

On 5 February 2003, the Commission adopted a Communication on the role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge[42]. The Communication outlines the challenges European higher education is faced with being at the crossroads of research, advanced training and innovation. The Communication has led to many reactions from academia and society at large, individual academics, universities, university networks, research bodies, public authorities, employers, trade unions etc. This section contains preliminary information about the reactions and suggestions received.

2.1. A first observation is that the Communication and the opportunity to contribute to the debate were welcomed by those concerned. 140 answers were received and are currently being analysed in detail by the Commission. Given that most answers are from European and national networks and consortia rather than from single institutions or persons, this is a very satisfactory quantitative answer. There were 7 answers from governments, 13 from economic/industrial stakeholders and altogether comments were received from 19 countries.

2.2. Many answers received provide comments, examples of national or institutional initiatives and suggestions in some or all of the 8 areas in which specific answers were invited. They are in broad agreement with the Commission's underlying analysis of the key role for universities in the Europe of knowledge and of the basic conditions under which universities will be able to fulfil their role. Many contributions stress the need to address the fundamental issues with fresh energy while doing away with some traditional taboos. The importance of funding issues is largely underlined, in terms of the level of funding required, the necessary diversification of revenues and the need to use existing resources in the most efficient way. Overlong studies and high dropout rates are seen as wasted resources both from the learner's and the university's side. While the trends towards more institutional autonomy are generally welcomed, many contributions emphasise the need to develop more professional management approaches and procedures in university management. While there should not be a disconnection between research and teaching, the general picture of a diversified European university landscape, with various degrees of research-intensity, various types of research/innovation and various profiles of teaching/learning are generally accepted as a way into the future. Specific support for excellence in research, but also in teaching and in social/regional involvement, is widely seen as desirable.

2.3. Universities and their representative networks expect more action at European level, in particular with regard to the creation of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research and Innovation Area. Suggestions in this context include increased EU financial support, e.g. to underpin mobility, structural change in the Bologna framework, capacity building in research and innovation, regional innovation clusters, the attractiveness of Europe in education and research, etc. They also call for the creation of various European instruments, such as joint degrees, doctoral schools, quality assurance mechanisms, transparency tools, flexible admission policies, etc. Such recommendations are often combined with pleas to relinquish national regulations in areas such as access, recognition and

[42] COM(2003) 58 final of 05.03.2003 http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0058en01.pdf

staff mobility, seen as hindering universities in several countries from fully taking advantage of new opportunities emerging at European level. The answers also reflect a high awareness of the role of universities as engines of regional development, as well as much concern about regional imbalances and their possible impact on brain drain. Various suggestions were made for stronger support for universities from the European Structural Funds[43].

2.4. There seems to be a general recognition of the need to enhance the attractiveness of higher education systems and institutions in Europe and world-wide. Many answers stress the need to compare Europe with the USA (which factors make the US system successful?) and submit comparative data. At the same time, in line with the Commission's view, they caution against wishing to transplant all US features. Human resource aspects (careers, status, development opportunities) and curricular aspects (degree recognition, demonstration of quality, relevance to learners' needs) are seen as particularly important in this context.

The Commission will complete the analysis of all answers during the autumn of 2003 with a view of presenting a follow-up Communication during the first semester of 2004. It will look in more detail into some of the main issues, through seminars (e.g. on regional aspects and on human resource management) or specific studies (notably on the funding of higher education as well as of research). A conference on possible follow-up measures at national and European level will be held in Liege on 26/28 April 2004.

3. From Prague to Berlin the EU Contribution

The Commission actively contributes to the realisation of the Bologna process in partnership with the higher education sector and with the support of 30 European countries gathered in the Socrates-Erasmus Programme Committee. The Commission supports the main Bologna events, conferences, seminars and reports[44] (Trends III Report and the Official Rapporteur Prof. Zgaga). The Commission has also decided to fund pilot projects in a number of areas in order to test innovative Bologna concepts in practice. A number of Commission activities relevant to the Bologna process are briefly presented below.

3.1 Credits for Lifelong Learning

The aim of this activity is to transform the existing ECTS into a system that would help citizens to accumulate credits gained through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Exploratory projects have taken place in 2002-2003. They will be followed by small scale testing in 2003-2004. A new broad scheme on Credits for Lifelong Learning (ECTS plus) could start in 2004-2005 involving learners, employers, universities, vocational training institutions and other LLL providers. As a preparation, the Commission will launch a special campaign to promote the consistent use of ECTS throughout Europe and an ECTS label will be awarded to universities which use ECTS in all first and second cycle degree programmes.

[43] i.e. the European Social Fund and the European Regional Fund.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf2000/index-en.htm
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm

[44] The Commision will also publish an Eurydice survey on the implementation of the Bologna structural reforms in 30 European countries in September 2003.

3.2 European Cooperation in Quality Assurance

Under this heading the Commission supports two types of activities: Activities aiming at promoting an internal quality culture within universities and activities improving the impact of external quality evaluations.

The internal quality assurance activities are supported through a pilot scheme organised by the European University Association EUA. Six groups of universities and other higher education institutions have worked together for one year on themes such as "research management", "teaching and learning" and "implementing Bologna reforms". The pilot scheme helped the institutions to introduce internal quality assurance mechanisms, improve their quality levels and being better prepared for external evaluations. The pilot demonstrated the need for strong university leadership and university autonomy in developing a quality culture. The Commission intends to continue the pilot with a second group of universities, thus spreading this experience across a variety of institutions in Europe.

External quality assurance is being promoted through the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ENQA. As an experiment, ENQA has carried out an external evaluation of 14 departments against sets of common evaluation criteria in three subject areas: History, Physics and Veterinary Science. The Trans-national European Evaluation Project (TEEP 2002) has shown that it is possible to evaluate study programmes across borders against sets of common criteria as long as the universities concerned agree to take the common criteria as a starting point for the evaluation.

After the Berlin Conference, the Commission will present a Report to the Parliament and the Council of Ministers on the implementation of the Council Recommendation of September 1998 on European co-operation in quality assurance in higher education. Drawing lessons from the experiences acquired, the Commission Report will contain proposals on how to make European quality assurance more coherent. See also section 4 below.

3.3 Joint Degrees

Well-defined European degrees can contribute to the quality and visibility of European Higher Education. The Commission has supported a pilot project on Joint Masters organised by the EUA in the academic year 2002-2003. The Pilot Project has shown how Joint Masters function in practice, how universities integrate their curricula, how they organise mobility and how the recognition of diplomas is dealt with at present. The outcomes of the pilot will be used in the implementation of the "Erasmus Mundus" programme. The Commission welcomes the proposed commitment of Ministers at national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees.

3.4 Doctoral level

The Commission welcomes the proposed extension of the Bologna reforms (transparency, credits, quality assurance, recognition etc.) to the doctoral level. On 18 July 2003, the Commission adopted a Communication "Researchers in the European Research Area, One Profession, Multiple Careers"[45], which recommends that doctoral programmes take into account broader needs of the labour market and integrate structured mentoring as an integral

[45] COM(2003) 436 final of 18.07.2003

part. The time may indeed be right to take a fresh look at the notion of "European doctorates" and the recognition of doctoral degrees in Europe for the purpose of careers in R&D. Bologna Signatory States are called upon to adjust the legislative framework so that joint doctorates can be implemented more easily and obstacles to recognition removed. As a concrete step, the Commission will support in 2003-2004 a pilot project examining the status of doctoral candidates, the functioning of doctoral programmes in Europe, ways to improve them and to promote pooling of resources in cross-border activities and programmes, possibly leading to a "European Doctorate".

3.5 Tuning Educational Structures in Europe

Another important Commission supported activity which relates to the Bologna reforms is the project called "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe", a university initiative co-ordinated by the universities of Deusto (Spain) and Groningen (The Netherlands). Some 135 universities are participating in this project, which addresses several of the action lines of the Bologna process, notably the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees and the adoption of a two-cycle system. More specifically, the project aims at identifying generic and subject specific competences for first and second cycle studies in nine subject areas (Business studies, Education Sciences, Geology, History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, European Studies and Nursing) and provides a methodology for analysing common elements and differences.

Competences describe what a learner knows in theory and is able to do in practice on the labour market. They provide a common language for describing learning without interfering in the organisation of the university and the method of teaching. Agreement on core competences will facilitate comparison and recognition of degrees, whilst respecting the autonomy of the university and its capacity to innovate and experiment. Competence descriptors will assist universities in curriculum development and can also be used for the purpose of internal and external quality assurance.

4. Concrete steps forward in Berlin

The European Higher Education Ministers share the common objective to realise the European Higher Education Area by 2010. For this to happen, a series of reforms need to be introduced, not only by law but also in the daily practice of the higher education institutions. It is not enough to take stock of the progress achieved so far. Ministers should set priorities and agree on targets to be achieved in key areas of the Bologna process already in 2005 in order to have the reforms in place by 2010. The Commission agrees that these priorities are: quality assurance, the two cycle system and recognition of degrees and periods of study.

- As regards quality assurance, all Signatory States should have quality assurance systems in operation by 2005. At the European level it is necessary to have, by 2005, agreed sets of standards, procedures and guidelines for external evaluations carried out by quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies. The agencies themselves should be subject to some form of monitoring or peer review in order to ensure their independence and trustworthiness. The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ENQA should work out such agreement in consultation with the higher education sector represented at European level.

- All countries should have started implementing the two cycle system by 2005. Six years after the signing of the Bologna Declaration, the legal and practical conditions should be in place and students must be able to enrol in the new style programmes of their choosing. The new degrees should fit into National Qualifications Frameworks, allowing citizens, under well-defined conditions, to move between different types of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The National Qualifications Framework would articulate against the emerging European Qualifications Framework, based on a common understanding of learning outcomes and competencies acquired by graduates.

- A European Qualifications Framework, complemented by a coherent system of Quality Assurance - for Ministers to approve by 2005 - would create a climate of trust based on transparency and would facilitate the recognition of diplomas and periods of study. Recognition would also benefit from the ratification and application of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. By 2005, all students graduating should receive the Diploma Supplement issued in a widely spoken European language and free of charge. In order to promote this objective, the Commission has introduced a Diploma Supplement Label for universities already fulfilling this requirement.

- The Commission also welcomes proposals to make student loans and grants portable in order to enable students to carry out short periods of study or full cycles in other European countries.

5. Conclusion

The realisation of the European Higher Education Area requires substantial efforts on the part of the Bologna Signatory States, universities and higher education institutions. There is commitment at national, regional and institutional level to reach this objective. The European Commission has taken a number of initiatives and is supporting others. It is now for Ministers responsible for Higher Education to take decisive steps forward with the aim of realising the "European Higher Education Area" as part of the "Europe of Knowledge".

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Graz Declaration

Forward from Berlin: the role of universities

To 2010 and beyond

1. *Universities* are central to the development of European society. They create, safeguard and transmit knowledge vital for social and economic welfare, locally, regionally and globally. They cultivate European values and culture.

2. *Universities* advocate a Europe of knowledge, based on a strong research capacity and research-based education in universities – singly and in partnership – across the continent. Cultural and linguistic diversity enhances teaching and research.

3. The development of European universities is based on a set of core values: *equity and access; research and scholarship in all disciplines as an integral part* of higher education; high academic quality; cultural and linguistic diversity.

4. *Students* are key partners within the academic community. The Bologna reforms will: facilitate the introduction of flexible and individualised learning paths for all students; improve the employability of graduates and make our institutions attractive to students from Europe and from other continents.

5. *European universities* are active on a global scale, contributing to innovation and sustainable economic development. Competitiveness and excellence must be balanced with social cohesion and access. The Bologna Reforms will only be successful if universities address both the challenge of global competition and the importance of fostering a stronger civic society across Europe.

6. *Universities* must continue to foster the highest level of quality, governance and leadership.

Universities as a public responsibility

7. *Governments, universities and their students* must all be committed to the long-term vision of a Europe of knowledge. Universities should be encouraged to develop in different forms and to generate funds from a variety of sources. However, higher education remains first and foremost a public responsibility so as to maintain core academic and civic values, stimulate overall excellence and enable universities to play

their role as essential partners in advancing social, economic and cultural development.

8. *Governments* must therefore empower institutions and strengthen their essential autonomy by providing stable legal and funding environments. Universities accept accountability and will assume the responsibility of implementing reform in close cooperation with students and stakeholders, improving institutional quality and strategic management capacity.

Research as an integral part of higher education

9. The integral link between higher education and research is central to European higher education and a defining feature of Europe's universities. *Governments* need to be aware of this interaction and to promote closer links between the European Higher Education and Research Areas as a means of strengthening Europe's research capacity, and improving the quality and attractiveness of European higher education. They should therefore fully recognise the doctoral level as the third 'cycle' in the Bologna Process. *Universities* need to keep pressing the case for research-led teaching and learning in Europe's universities. Graduates at all levels must have been exposed to a research environment and to research-based training in order to meet the needs of Europe as a knowledge society.

10. The diversity of universities across Europe provides great potential for fruitful collaboration based upon different interests, missions and strengths. Enhancing European collaboration and increasing mobility at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels are essential, for example through the promotion of Joint Doctoral programmes, as a further means of linking the European Higher education and Research Areas.

Improving academic quality by building strong institutions

11. Successful implementation of reforms requires leadership, quality and strategic management within each institution. *Governments* must create the conditions enabling universities to take long-term decisions regarding their internal organisation and administration, e.g. the structure and internal balance between institutional level and faculties and the management of staff. *Governments and universities* should enter negotiated contracts of sufficient duration to allow and support innovation.

12. *Universities* for their part must foster leadership and create a structure of governance that will allow the institution as a whole to create rigorous internal quality assurance, accountability and transparency. Students should play their part by serving on relevant committees. External stakeholders should serve on governing or advisory boards.

Pushing Forward the Bologna Process

13. The Bologna Process must avoid over-regulation and instead develop reference points and common level and course descriptors.

14. Implementing a system of three levels (the doctoral level being the third) requires further change. *Universities* see the priorities for action as:
    - Ø Consolidating ECTS as a means to restructure and develop curricula with the aim of creating student-centred and flexible learning paths including life long learning;
    - Ø Discussing and developing common definitions of qualification frameworks and learning outcomes at the European level while safeguarding the benefits of diversity and institutional autonomy in relation to curricula;
    - Ø Involving academics, students, professional organisations and employers in redesigning the curricula in order to give bachelor and master degrees meaning in their own right;
    - Ø Continuing to define and promote employability skills in a broad sense in the curriculum and ensuring that first cycle programmes offer the option of entering the labour market;
    - Ø Introducing the Diploma Supplement more widely, and in major languages, as a means to enhance employability, making it widely known among employers and professional organisations.

Mobility and the Social Dimension

15. Student mobility in itself promotes academic quality. It enables diversity to be an asset, enhancing the quality of teaching and research through comparative and distinctive approaches to learning. It increases the employability of individuals. Staff mobility has similar benefits.

16. If the EHEA is to become a reality *governments* must: tackle the current obstacles to mobility, amend legislation on student support, e.g. to make study grants and loans portable and improve regulations on health care, social services and work permits.

17. *Governments and institutions* together must give incentives to mobility by improving student support (including social support, housing and opportunities for part-time work) academic and professional counselling, language learning and the recognition of qualifications. Institutions must ensure that full use is made of tools which promote mobility, in particular ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. Possibilities also need to be increased for short-term mobility, and mobility of part-time, distance and mature students.

18. Career paths for young researchers and teachers, including measures to encourage young PhDs to continue working in/return to Europe, must be improved. Gender perspectives require special measures for dual career families. Restrictions on transfer of pension rights must be removed through portable pensions and other forms of social support.

19. Increasing the participation of women in research and teaching is essential in a competitive Europe. Gender equality promotes academic quality and *universities* must promote it through their human resource management policies.

20. The TRENDS III Report demonstrates that the information base, in particular in relation to mobility issues, is inadequate. National governments should co-operate to improve statistical data and work with the European Commission to review existing

monitoring mechanisms. There should be more research on issues related to the development of the EHEA.

21. Joint programmes and degrees based on integrated curricula are excellent means for strengthening European cooperation. *Governments* must remove legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees and also consider the specific financial requirements of such collaboration.

22. *Institutions* should identify the need for and then develop joint programmes, promoting the exchange of best practice from current pilot projects and ensuring high quality by encouraging the definition of learning outcomes and competences and the widespread use of ECTS credits.

Quality assurance: a policy framework for Europe

23. Quality assurance is a major issue in the Bologna process, and its importance is increasing. The EUA proposes a coherent QA policy for Europe, based on the belief: that institutional autonomy creates and requires responsibility, that *universities* are responsible for developing internal quality cultures and that progress at European level involving all stakeholders is a necessary next step.

24. An internal quality culture and effective procedures foster vibrant intellectual and educational attainment. Effective leadership, management and governance also do this. With the active contribution of students, *universities* must monitor and evaluate all their activities, including study programmes and service departments. External quality assurance procedures should focus on checking through institutional audit that internal monitoring has been effectively done.

25. The purpose of a European dimension to quality assurance is to promote mutual trust and improve transparency while respecting the diversity of national contexts and subject areas.

26. QA procedures for Europe must: promote academic and organisational quality, respect institutional autonomy, develop internal quality cultures, be cost effective, include evaluation of the QA agencies, minimise bureaucracy and cost, and avoid over regulation.

27. EUA therefore proposes that stakeholders, and in particular universities, should collaborate to establish a provisional 'Higher Education Quality Committee for Europe'. This should be independent, respect the responsibility of institutions for quality and demonstrate responsiveness to public concerns. It would provide a forum for discussion and, through the appointment of a small board, monitor the application of a proposed code of principles, developing a true European dimension in quality assurance.

Universities at the centre of reform

28. The Bologna process was initially politically driven. But it is now gaining momentum because of the active and voluntary participation of all interested partners: higher education institutions, governments, students and other stakeholders. Top down

reforms are not sufficient to reach the ambitious goals set for 2010. The main challenge is now to ensure that the reforms are fully integrated into core institutional functions and development processes, to make them self-sustaining. Universities must have time to transform legislative changes into meaningful academic aims and institutional realities.

29. Governments and other stakeholders need to acknowledge the extent of institutional innovation, and the crucial contribution universities do and must make to the European Research Area and the longer-term development of the European knowledge society as outlined in the Lisbon declaration of the European Union. By united action, European higher education – which now touches the lives of more than half the population of Europe – can improve the entire continent.

Leuven, 4 July 2003

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Message to the Berlin Higher Education Summit

From Mr Walter Schwimmer,
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

I confirm the Council of Europe's commitment to the Bologna Process aiming to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010. In this way, the Council of Europe will, with all the participating countries and important partners help bring about the most important reform of higher education in Europe since the immediate aftermath of 1968.

As Ministers responsible for higher education, you will at the Berlin Higher Education Summit make decisions that will bring the Bologna Process an important step forward in terms of both content and geographical scope, based on our common heritage and values as transmitted by the European higher education community.

The Council of Europe is fully prepared to continue to play an important role in carrying out your decisions and in forming the work programme of the Bologna Process through active participation in the Bologna follow-up structures. I firmly believe the participation of a pan-European intergovernmental organisation will be a useful supplement to the expertise of the representatives of national Ministries in the follow-up structures.

In keeping with its fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Council of Europe is committed to equal opportunities for higher education for all qualified candidates regardless of their gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. The Council of Europe therefore believes that public authorities should play an important role in the provision of higher education as well as in devising the framework within which this provision is given. As a contribution to the reflection on the social dimension of higher education, the Council of Europe therefore intends to organise a major conference on the public responsibility for higher education in 2004. The conference will be held at Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg, and I would very much welcome its inclusion in the official work programme of the Bologna Process 2003 – 2005.

Having in mind that new demands on and changes in European higher education systems should be followed with efficient and participative higher education governance, this is another key area to which the Council of Europe will contribute on the strength of years of experience from both intergovernmental and bilateral work. In this area, the Council of Europe will address a number of issues including the definition of institutional autonomy, student participation in higher education governance, the relationship between institutional self-governance and the participation of external stakeholders in the decision making of higher education institutions and the relationship between the central levels of the institution and the faculties.

On the basis of our Lisbon Recognition Convention, and in co-operation with the European Commission and UNESCO, the Council of Europe will continue to develop policies and best practice to facilitate the recognition of higher education qualifications, as well as qualifications giving access to higher education throughout the European Higher Education Area. The ENIC Network has approved a draft Recommendation on the recognition of joint degrees, which will be submitted to the Lisbon Recognition Convention for adoption in 2004, as well as a statement on its contribution to the Bologna Process.

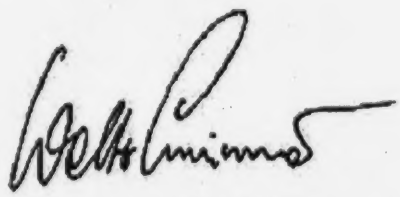
On the basis of the pan-European platform offered by the European Cultural Convention, the Council of Europe is uniquely well placed to provide a bridge between the European Higher Education Area and the remaining countries of Europe. Over the past two years, the Council of Europe has presented the main policies of the Bologna process to important parts of the higher education communities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", all of which have now applied for membership of the Bologna Process, as well as in Russia. The Council of Europe has also assisted with the revision of national legislation in these countries, underlining the importance of legislative reforms for the Bologna Process to reach its goals. The Council of Europe will continue to help implementing the policies that make up the backbone of the European Higher Education Area in those European countries that have not yet become a party to the Area, or that have joined only recently.

Not least, the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR), through its double membership of government and academic representatives contributes significantly to the dialogue between policy makers in Ministries responsible for higher education and the higher education community.

The CD-ESR is well placed to give an impetus to what should be the ultimate goal of the Bologna Process:

> a European Higher Education Area encompassing as much of Europe as possible and building on clear policies that will enhance the quality and attractiveness of higher education in Europe, stimulate the mobility of students, graduates and staff and guide public authorities and institutions in fulfilling the main purpose of higher education:
>
> - preparation for the labour market
> - preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
> - personal development;
> - development and maintenance of an advanced knowledge base.

I wish the Berlin Higher Education Summit every success in its progress towards the European Higher Education Area and assure you of the full support of the Council of Europe in this endeavour.



Walter SCHWIMMER

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EURASHE POLICY STATEMENT on the BOLOGNA PROCES – TOWARDS BERLIN 2003.

approved by the Plenary Council at the meeting in Gyöngyös, Hungary, 6th June 2003

EURASHE has been engaged in and has supported the Bologna Process since its inception and following the summit of European Ministers of Education in Prague in 2001 is represented in the Bologna Follow-up Group and the Berlin Preparatory Group.

EURASHE welcomes this breakthrough of acknowledgement for the Professional Higher Education Area in Europe. EURASHE supports the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in a Europe of Knowledge and the general thrust of the declarations developed through the dynamic and on-going Bologna Process.

In accordance with its general policy EURASHE will continue to strengthen its role as the representative body of the Professional Higher Education Area within the inclusive and open EHEA. Also, EURASHE will continue to encourage, initiate and elaborate concrete plans of action along the general lines of the Bologna Process.

As immediate priorities in the creation of EHEA EURASHE sees,

- **The creation of networking structures and mechanisms between Professional Higher Education Institutions, Universities and other higher education institutions.**
- **The further improvement and enlargement of cooperation with stakeholders, especially students and business and industry.**

EURASHE believes that these measures are necessary to further improve quality control mechanisms, to develop curricula and programs with continued relevance to the labour market, to elaborate new teaching and learning methods in the aspects of life-long learning and the social dimension of education, and to encourage and facilitate joint bachelor, master and research programs.

Other issues of importance to EURASHE are,

- **The full implementation of the Bachelor-Master structure in all areas of higher education by all Bologna signatories**

In this context EURASHE will draw attention to the existing Short Cycle Higher Education Area that in fact constitutes a large and important sector in many European countries and therefore should be taken into consideration in the creation of EHEA.

- **The further facilitation of mobility**

EURASHE will welcome the support of further tuning pilot-projects within the area of Professional Higher Education.
Also, trainee periods are an important and integrated part of a large number of professional higher education programs. The facilitation of trainee placements in countries abroad should be an issue in the Bologna Process.

- **The promotion of the European dimensions in higher education**

EURASHE agrees with the overall views on democracy in education, i.e. stakeholder, teacher, researcher, student and staff involvement in the process of decision making. We also believe that values connected to human rights, non-discrimination and gender equality must be integrated values in European education programs and institutions.

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